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Volume IX MAY 15, 1926 Number 3

CONTENTS

COVER DESIGN ..... Fred T. Everett .....
THE STORMY PETREL ..... Elliott Balestier 259
Complete Novelette
A THROW-BACK TO ROMANY ..... Josephine Bentham 285
Short Story
THE MOST MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING IN OUR LIVES Douglas Fairbanks and
No. 8 of a series of true mystery stories by famous people of stage and screen as related to Bide Dudley. Mary Pickford 290
WRATHFUL VALLEY ..... Ben Lucien Burman 295
Short Story
BRINGING HOME THE BACON ..... Everett Shinn 306
A Two Part Story—Part I
MADAME MONDAY ..... Robert W. Sneddon 332
Short Story
THE MATE OF THE GLOVE ..... Charlton Lawrence Edholm 339
Short Story
NO DEFENSE WHATEVER ..... Victor Lauriston 348
A Two Part Story—Conclusion
LARRY HAS A GROUCH ..... Harold de Polo 365
Short Story
ONE THING SETTLED ..... Marion Scott 377
Short Story

MISCELLANEOUS

CAPTAIN BARNABY'S LOG 294
SHOES OF DEATH 331
THE DEADLY BASILISK 347

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Around the Corner

MIGHTY few stories or plays have achieved the enviable success that fell to the lot of "Within the Law" and "The Thirteenth Chair," both written by Bayard Veiller. Almost every theatre-goer in the United States, and in the whole English-speaking world, has seen one or both of these plays and it is well-nigh impossible to find anyone who has not heard of "Within the Law." It is probably one of the best known titles in the whole field of fiction and the drama. And deservedly so. The play was melodrama—plus.

Therefore, taking a peek around MYSTERY MAGAZINE's next corner, we are able to make an announcement extraordinary—the announcement that BAYARD VEILLER, author of "WITHIN THE LAW" and "THE THIRTEENTH CHAIR," has written a three-part story entitled

"Still Within The Law"

and that the first installment will appear in the next issue of this magazine, out June 1.

Following hard upon serials, novelettes and short stories by such sterling writers as Percival C. Wren, author of "Beau Geste," Tod Robbins, author of "The Unholy Three," Richard Le Gallienne, Dale Collins, Agatha Christie, Arthur B. Reeve, Elizabeth Herrick, Robert W. Sneddon and many others of equal caliber—such an announcement as this new serial by the author of "Within the Law" should indicate conclusively just how different MYSTERY MAGAZINE really is.

In our true mystery story series, under the general title of "The Most Mysterious Happening in My Life," we have already had stories from Madge Kennedy, Mary and Florence Nash, A. L. Erlanger, David Belasco, Ethel Barrymore, Lenore Ulric, Augustus Thomas, and Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford in the order named; to which illustrious roster we will add, in our June 1 number, the name of CHANNING POLLOCK, author of "The Fool" and "The Enemy," who will tell his favorite mystery story, with Bide Dudley officiating at the typewriter.

"The Night Out," a most unusual novelette by F. Tennyson Jesse. "Clues," by Edgar Wallace. "Cooter," by Roark Bradford. "Hedda Speaks," by Susan Ertz.

These are promises made and kept by the issue of June 1.

The Stormy Petrel

By ELLIOT BALESTIER

A Complete Novelette

CHAPTER I

"PORTUGEE" BLOOD

ON the coast of Maine somewhere between Frenchman's Bay and the Bay of Fundy lies the straggling gray-gabled, time and storm-weathered little village of Pettingill's Cove.

Once the home of hardy fishermen, the breeding place of a score of clipper-ship masters and many a lesser rover of the seven seas, it is now a rural community to which the pursuits of the sea are only an avocation or at best a side line.

In recent years a semi-artistic and literary colony has preëmpted some of the deserted fishing-shacks or built for themselves odd-shaped bungalows and even more pretentious cottages on the surrounding dunes, but from "The Hill" behind the village the old gray stone Pettingill homestead — "Pettinghill's Cove," from which the town takes its name—still dominates them all.

From the square stone tower that rises thirty feet above the southeast corner of the main building, it seemed as if one could see straight across nearly three thousand miles of unbroken ocean to the grim headlands of Cape Finisterre and the coast of northern Spain.

But it was not of Spain that Rod Pettingill, last of the male line, was thinking as he leaned against the stone parapet of the tower and gazed off over the apparently motionless water.

It was of the man who lay dead in the big front bedroom below him; the man who had been a father to him—the only one he had ever known—who had stood always his friend, in all the storm and stress that seemed to pursue him like a fatality.

Returning, hopeful of peace, from three years of service wherever the cauldron of trouble bubbled the wildest—Belgium, France, and finally Russia, where as a pilot of the Royal Air Force with the ill-fated Archangel expedition he found it still boiling merrily, long after the Armistice—he had stepped into the most serious, the most personal trouble of all.

Dan, his uncle, foster-father and guardian, was dead, cut down in his prime by a foolish motorboat accident. He was still under fifty and powerful as all the Pettingill men. He it was who had sailed the seven seas from boy to master for nearly thirty years and had weathered more storms on every sea than any man on the coast.

IT was something of this sort that Rod was thinking when the lifting of the scuttle behind him caused him to turn to meet the keen, cold gaze of his aunt, Lucy Pettingill, her chin barely raised above the scuttle frame.

Rod knew better than to offer his

assistance. Aunt Lucy, for all her sixty years, scorned the assistance of any male.

Presently her lean length rose step by step as she slowly mounted the ladder, until she stood upon the roof beside him. The wind whipped her neat calico house dress around her meagre ankles, as she regarded him with a grimly speculative eye.

"Have ye read the papers yet?" she asked at last, pointing to the metal dispatch box that stood on the parapet beside him.

Rod looked at her in surprise.

The box he supposed contained only his dead father's and mother's papers, possibly the latter's jewels; the deed of the homestead, which was really his since it had been his father's, and other ordinary documents which should have been handed to him on his twenty-first birthday had he been there to receive them.

"Why, no," he replied slowly, and added by way of mild reproof of her quite uncharacteristic haste, "I intended to wait until after the funeral."

If Lucy saw the entente she gave it no heed.

"I would if I were you," she said dryly. "They might show the reason why yer Uncle Dan was killed."

"Killed!" repeated Rod in amazement. "Killed? Why it was an accident. His petrol—gasoline—tank exploded."

"What exploded it?" asked his aunt curtly.

"But, I say, look here, Aunt Lucy," exclaimed Rod, wondering if possibly the shock of her brother's death had unbalanced her mind, "you don't mean to imply that the accident was deliberately planned; that Dan was murdered? Why, he hadn't an enemy in the world."

"Huh!" returned Lucy. "Most men that *are* men have enemies, though I ain't sayin' it was *his* enemy done it. Most of *his* enemies are honest sailormen. But there's foreign blood in this family, *Roderigo* Pettingill — "Portugee" blood — and there's no tellin' what might happen.

"You were due here three days ago, remember—if you hadn't stopped over in Boston unexpected—and Ben Hammond, who is about your age and size, was with Dan. They ain't found *him* yet. And as to its being an accident, it wasn't. They were torpedered."

Rod was too startled to speak. The fling at his mother's birth passed unnoticed. He was too used to that from his father's sisters; and in any case the astounding statement would have rendered it unimportant.

"He was torpedered," repeated his aunt, a faint flush—a mark in her of great but carefully suppressed excitement—tinting her sallow cheeks. "I saw it. I was up here with a glass watching. Alvin Slocum's *Midget* was layin' off to wind'ard of yer Uncle Dan, maybe a quarter of a mile, fishin', like he was.

"Then a strange boat, fancy sort of yacht craft, came up to l'ward. There was one feller in it, and when it got abaft Dan, he leaned over and put something in the water and gave it a shove, and away it went lickety-split. I could see its white streak of wake.

"I thought maybe it was a baby seal. It warn't over two feet long; only it didn't swim like one and went about ten times as fast. Then it hit your uncle's boat right where Ben was sitting, by the gas tank and—*bang!*

"And a second later was another bang. *That* was the gasoline tank, and then it was all smoke and fire, and Alvin put right over and picked up your uncle. And when I thought

to look for the other boat, there she was just disappearing around the north head."

"But—but, my God!" gasped Rod as his aunt paused for breath. "Why didn't you tell this before?"

"Who to?" asked Lucy tartly. "The old folks here might believe me. Them that know me well. No one else would, but you. An' I ain't got any proof. You've got to get that, after yer see if them papers tell yer anything."

Rod's face hardened and he stared at his aunt in grim silence for a moment. He knew her too well to doubt the truth of her tale, weird though the idea of a miniature torpedo might be; and she was very far from being imaginative.

Then without a word he picked up the box and descended to his own room, locking his door behind him.

CHAPTER II

A SON OF THE SEA

IF there is anything in the theory that the physical conditions surrounding our advent into this life exert an influence upon one's character and future development, Rod Pettingill certainly came honestly by his soubriquet of the Stormy Petrel.

His Yankee father, Amos Pettingill, at the moment skipper of a troop-ship, had first met his mother, during the early days of the Spanish war when he had rescued the then Donna Carlotta Arteaga from a band of Cuban patriots. To them anything, even youth, beauty and innocence, stamped with a Spanish label was *anathema maran atha* and then some.

Later he had wooed, won, and eloped with her, despite the strenuous obstacles of war and even more strenuous opposition of the lady's parents.

Then the short war having ended, his ship had gone back into its legitimate East India trade, and he had taken his bride on a belated honeymoon to the far East. The fates were not propitious, however, for it was a stormy trip out and a worse one back, ending in a very epic of storm when his vessel piled up on his native Maine coast.

At the height of that storm, while the doomed ship ground out her life on the jagged reefs, Roderigo was born and his lady-mother died.

Captain Pettingill and most of the crew went down with the ship. Only the mate, Dan Pettingill, a younger brother of the captain, and three of the forecastle hands reached shore, via the breeches-buoy.

Dan carried the newborn child buttoned under his slicker.

The wife of a member of the life-saving crew fanned the flickering spirit of the storm-bred infant back to life and gave him his first meal, robbing her own sturdy first-born to do so; and so presently, via the breeches-buoy, the life-saving station and a branch of the Boston and Main Railroad, Roderigo Santiago, Arteaga Pettingill, came to the home of his fathers.

He was just one week old when he arrived at the big four-square, stone house, with its articulated tail of out-buildings and sheds, that had been the home of the Pettingills for five generations; and Dan, having legally adopted him, sat down and wrote to Don Roderigo Santiago Arteago, late of Cuba, now of Madrid, setting forth the facts briefly, succinctly, and without comment.

It is worth recording that he received no direct answer to this letter from Roderigo's noble grandfather. Somewhat later, however, there came a letter from a Madrid lawyer, conveying the information that he held certain securities which upon

legal proof would be turned over to the guardians of the son of the late Carlotta Arteaga.

It was carefully explained that this was not to be taken in any sense as a recognition by Don Roderigo or the Arteaga family of the existence of the child. So far as they were concerned the Donna Carlotta died the day she was married to a low-caste Americano, to say nothing of an enemy of her country.

The law, however, looked at the matter somewhat differently; and since this money was the personal fortune of the Donna Carlotta inherited from her maternal grandfather, Don Roderigo had instructed his lawyer to take such action as the law required.

To this Dan replied in curt sea-English that, so far as he personally was concerned, the lawyer might take the securities together with the whole noble Arteaga family and do a high dive with them into a certain well-known lake of fire and brimstone.

He had done his duty in regard to the christening, but so far as the boy's future life was concerned he was Rod Pettingill of Pettingill Cove, and as such able to look out for himself without the aid of foreign capital.

He would, however, he added, keep the lawyer's letter, and turn it over to Rod when he became of age, together with his father's property (which was ample) and his mother's jewels. Then Rod could do as he liked about the matter. In the meantime if the lawyer had anything more to say he'd have to say it in English, because he, Dan, wouldn't spend another two dollars to get a letter translated into a human language.

The lawyer did not write again and Rod Pettingill grew up, as a Pettingill should, on the coast of Maine, though not exactly in the footsteps of his father.

This was partly due to natural evolution for the Pettingills had grown rich; each generation had added to the worldly goods of the last, and Amos had left a substantial fortune.

But Rod was not all Pettingill in spite of his upbringing. He had his father's broad shoulders and powerful physique, though drawn on somewhat finer lines; much of his father's cool courage and daring, modified by a far more vivid imagination. In him his father's clear judgment of men was intensified by a deeper sympathy and keener understanding of motives.

But his face was a masculine replica of his mother's. The same thick black hair, the same softly oval face and delicately olive complexion, deepened but not rendered harsh by the tan of the sea; the same large deeply fringed black eyes, and the high-bridged, delicate nose that marks caste more unmistakably than any other feature.

Undeniably Rod Pettingill was handsome; still more undeniably was he "romantic looking"; and the innate chivalry, that in his father's race is usually concealed under a surface bluffness, was in his case owing to the strong influence of his southern blood, evidenced by a delicate courtesy of manner, a quite natural and wholly unconscious gallantry, especially toward women, that led to many and sometimes serious misunderstandings.

But on the whole his boyhood and early youth passed with only minor squalls, and up to the time of his enlistment in the Royal Air Force (then the Royal Flying Corps) he could count no man his serious enemy.

CHAPTER III

THE LOG

AS he sat in his room the papers from the dispatch-box spread before him, a puzzled frown furrowed Rod's usually serene brow.

Nearly all the facts disclosed by the papers were known to him. Only the Spanish lawyer's letter, and the details of the incidents preceding and immediately following his birth, set forth in a series of diaries, a sort of private log of his uncle's, were new to him.

He found much that was written in that log of intense interest. What he read between the lines of the sailor's brief descriptions and bold statements of fact told him even more; but nowhere was there anything that might throw even the faintest light upon the mystery created by his Aunt Lucy's story.

If it were to be believed, and her conclusion accepted, young Ben Hammond had been deliberately murdered in mistake for himself, Dan's death being merely incidental and unconsidered.

The ruthlessness of it would have done much to discredit Lucy's theory had not his lifelong experience of that lady's keenness, almost fanatical truthfulness, utter lack of imagination or nerves, and invariable habit of being absolutely sure of her facts before speaking, made disbelief impossible to him.

The wrecking of the motorboat had been a deliberate attempt upon his life. Why? By whom?

Rod shrugged his shoulders in helpless puzzlement, and rose to answer a knock at his door. His aunt entered silently, closing the door behind her.

"Found anything?" she asked curtly, her grim face as expressionless as—to use her own expression—a stone post.

"Not a thing," returned Rod hopelessly. "Nothing except an old letter written when I was a baby, from a Spanish lawyer offering me some of the Arteaga money—Uncle Dan refused it naturally. It was probably only a few thousand *pesetas* anyway. I don't imagine many of the Spanish residents of Cuba got away from that island with large fortunes."

"Find his log?" asked Lucy.

"Yes, six little books. It begins with the voyage when my father met mother. Uncle Dan was with him, you know. And it ends the day I left for Canada to enlist."

Lucy's hand swooped into the capacious pocket in her apron and produced a small book similar to those on the table.

"Here's another," she said briefly. "I found it under his pillow."

Rod seized it eagerly.

"Does it give any clue?" he questioned hopefully.

His aunt turned her faded blue eyes upon him, with an inscrutable expression.

"He kept his log for you, not for his women folks," she returned. "Read it."

And she stalked grimly out of the room.

ROD glanced rapidly through the seventh volume of Dan Pettingill's log, and closed it with an exclamation of disappointment. Nothing! The few entries at widely separated dates dealt only with things, largely of a business nature, which, while under ordinary circumstances they would have been of interest to him, were negligible in the face of the problem confronting him.

His brow wrinkled in puzzled thought, Rod sat idly flapping the leaves of the little volume, not more

than half of which had been filled by the few short entries.

Suddenly he paused and snapped open the book midway of the blank pages at the back. Something else was written there—in Dan's handwriting, but so weak and shaky that Rod had to go to the window to decipher the illegible scrawl.

"Rod:" he read, "The *Water Witch* did it. Not an accident. Blown up. Hoped to see you. Too late. Going fast. Look out for Mar——"

The last word was unfinished but a curious numb coldness stole over Rod.

What had Dan meant? What did the message imply?

The *Water Witch* he knew well—the largest, fastest motorboat on the coast, at the time he had left for the war, and the property of Tremont Marshall—the best friend he had ever had, except Dan himself.

More than that, Marshall was the father of Marjorie; the one girl. The girl whose letters had sustained him through all the horrors of the Great Tragedy, who had promised to wait for him, and with whom he would now have been, had not the unexpected business in Boston and the tragedy at Pettingill's Cove delayed him.

He drew from his pocket the letter he had received from her that morning, and turning to one particular paragraph read it again, with suddenly enlivened interest:

> Roddy, I don't want you to neglect your duty to the home folks, but wont you come to me as soon as possible after the funeral? Come to Jonesboro, and I shall meet you there with the *Water Witch* if you will wire me. This island of father's is only a few miles from there in Englishmen's Bay. Roddy, I'm worried about Dad. He grows more morose and irritable—even with me—every day, and that South American client of his and his sister, who are with us, grow more unbearable.

For a long time Rod stood staring unseeingly out of the window, vainly seeking some clue to the mystery that each added fact seemed only to deepen. Then, with a sudden determination, he rose and sought his aunt. He found her in the sitting-room methodically darning some of Dan's socks before putting them away for good.

"Aunt Lucy," he began abruptly, standing before her, "what is it you know that you haven't told me?"

She regarded him silently for a moment, her face as expressionless as ever.

"Have ye read the log-book I gave you?" she replied, answering his question, Yankee fashion, with another.

"Yes," he replied.

"*All* of it?"

"*All* of it. What did Uncle Dan tell you, that he didn't—wasn't able—to write?"

"Dan didn't tell me anything," she replied. "I didn't even *see* him write what he did. I was out of the room for a minute, and when I came back the book was in his hand and he was unconscious. I put it under his pillow. He never came to."

"Well, what do you make of it?" asked Rod desperately.

"Maybe Marshall sold the *Water Witch*, or she was stolen," she replied indirectly.

"He didn't and she wasn't!" returned Rod irritably. "Marshall has her now at an island he owns in Englishman's Bay."

"Then maybe Dan made a mistake. The *Water Witch* used to be white and her cabin was different from the boat I saw."

"For goodness sake, don't quibble, Aunt Lucy!" burst out Rod. "You know as well as I do paint and any amount of changes in her upper works wouldn't disguise from Uncle Dan a boat he's known for years—or any other Pettingill. What I

want to know is if *you* know or suspect or have even the vaguest idea why Uncle Dan should warn me against Tremont Marshall?"

Miss Lucy's face relaxed to what might be construed as the ghost of a grim smile.

"I didn't know he did," she responded quietly.

"Didn't you read the log?" demanded Rod impatiently.

"I did, and if it's my advice you want, I'd say you'd better leave for that island right after the funeral this afternoon, and heed your uncle's last words."

"His last words?" repeated Rod, puzzled. "His last words were a warning—'Look out for Mar—Marshall', of course."

"Huh!" returned Miss Lucy disgustedly. "'Portugee' blood makes a thick head. *I* thought he was telling you to guard your sweetheart—'Look out for Mar'—*jorie*."

Rod looked at her blankly. He had taken it so as a matter of course that the last sentence of his uncle's fragmentary scrawl was a simple corrolary of the first, that it had not occurred to him to seek another meaning or to take into account the vagaries of the English language in which, frequently, the same words may mean diametrically opposite things.

Of course the idiomatic phrase "look out for" might mean "take care of" equally as well as "beware of" and the word beginning "Mar—" might be "Marjorie" as easily as "Marshall." In this case this construction was by far the more natural, since Dan had always been especially fond of Marjorie from her pigtail days when the Marshalls had made the Cove their summer home.

"Aunt Lucy, you are right and I'm a fool," Rod said at last. "Perhaps if Uncle Dan had lived he could have told us more, but it is obvious anyway that something is wrong at the Marshalls. I am going to send a telegram now. Then I'm going to borrow the *Midget* and run up to Englishman's Bay immediately after the funeral."

But the telegram was not, as Lucy Pettingill assumed, to Marjorie Marshall. It was addressed to one Thomas N. Curtis, ex-sergeant of the Royal Air Force, but now, repatriated, and skipper of a blunt-nosed powerful tug, misnamed the *Sylph*, in the fleet of the "Curtis and Wright Towing and Wrecking Co.," of Portland, Maine, and demanded an immediate and personal answer.

The answer arrived, on the blunt-nosed tug, while the funeral of Dan Pettingill was in progress, and Rod received it on his way to board the *Midget*, for his trip up the coast.

It took the form of a long, lean young man, whose lank build disguised the amazing power of his muscles. His cheerful perennial grin gave no hint of the shrewd cleverness that lurked behind it, but Rod knew that his brief instructions would be carried out to the letter, and that if there was anything to learn, Tom Curtis would uncover it.

CHAPTER IV.

AT MARSHALL'S ISLAND

THE sun, a huge globe of molten fire, had quenched itself in the waters beyond the horizon. Nothing remained of the riotous glory of the sunset but the faint rapidly graying afterglow, when Rod Pettingill, having stopped at Jonesboro for more explicit directions than Marjorie had given in her letter, brought the *Midget* into the tiny cove on the landward side of the Marshall island.

There were several boats in the cove. With the easy skill of one born and raised on the water, he picked up

an unoccupied mooring and making fast paused for a moment to observe with interest a larger, more pretentious motorboat, moored a few yards away.

She was painted black with a gold strake, instead of white as formerly, and her cabins had been slightly altered, but she was obviously the old *Water Witch*.

There was as much chance of Dan's making a mistake in his identification as there would be of Rod himself failing to recognize Marjorie because of a new hat and dress.

This was the craft that a few days before had been used with the ruthlessness of a German submarine to torpedo his uncle's boat and murder not only Dan but young Ben Hammond. Who had used it? Certainly it should not be difficult to discover that. Why? That was the puzzling question.

Rod's face was grim as he tossed his suitcase into the dingy, and following it sculled rapidly to the float.

The twilight was deeper now, the azure of the sky changing to purple. Down near the horizon the evening star gleamed and glittered like a great white diamond hung in space.

Slowly Rod made his way along the float, and up some steps leading to the veranda, that surrounded a rather elaborate but dark and silent boathouse. Beyond this a flower-bordered path led away to a thin grove of hardy evergreen trees, through which he could see the lights of the house, a long, low semi-bungalow with a row of gabled windows above the deep covered porch.

Rod hurried forward, a sudden flood of tenderness for the girl he had not seen for so long sweeping all other thoughts from his mind. But a hundred feet from the building he paused.

A white figure had suddenly appeared at one of the upper windows and even in the dim twilight he recognized Marjorie. And she was looking for him apparently, for she held a pair of binoculars to her eyes and with them was sweeping the water between the island and the mainland.

Rod was about to hail her, when a sound from close by silenced him—the sound of a guitar lightly strummed evidently by the hand of a master. Rod frowned and drew back a few feet further into the shadow of the grove, as the unseen player after a half dozen chords of the prelude swept, in a rich but muted tenor, into a passionate Spanish love song.

It was a beautiful song well rendered, but Rod was not in a mood to appreciate either the song or the art of the singer. A grim smile curved his lips.

The "Portugee," he thought, unconsciously applying the half contemptuous epithet the coastwise New Englander uses for all white foreigners. Obviously he was serenading Marjorie, and very much in earnest about it, to judge by the pathetic pleading of his voice and the depth of feeling he put into his phrasing of the liquid Spanish words.

Rod, whose drawing back into the shadows had at first been purely instinctive, had no intention of eavesdropping or spying. But his aunt's story, corroborated as it was by Dan's last message, had stirred him deeply, and the sight of the *Water Witch* in the cove had set his nerves tingling.

During all the run up the coast he had vainly cudgeled his brain for even a shadow of a motive, and now a possible one was supplied.

This South American was obviously head over heels in love with Marjorie; he must be aware that she was, to all intents and purposes, engaged to another. Would he not wish to dispose of his rival?

Probably the idea would not even have occurred to a full-blooded Anglo-Saxon, or if it had it would have been dismissed as absurd. But Rod was half Spanish himself; for the moment the supposition seemed reasonable enough.

On second thought, however, he realized that the conclusion was a bit far-fetched and melodramatic. In this day and generation even hot-blooded Southern Latins did not resort to cold-blooded and wholesale murder merely to remove a rival.

The South-American *might* be implicated. He was *there*. He doubtless had access to the *Water Witch*. In other words, the *opportunity* was his, but a convincing motive was still lacking.

Rod had never heard of this Don Carlos de Peralta, nor of his sister Dorothea, except for the casual mention of them in Marjorie's letters. So far as he knew they had never heard of him except possibly through the Marshalls.

Eliminating the improbable rivalry in love theory, why should they want him removed so desperately that they were willing to sacrifice innocent strangers to accomplish their purpose? They or anyone else? There was no answer to the question.

WITH an exclamation of impatience Rod strode forward toward the house ruthlessly interrupting the romantic serenader at the most impassioned passage of his song with the thrilling whistle that had been his and Marjorie's "secret signal" from childhood.

A glad cry from the window answered him, followed by a clatter as the girl dropped the glasses recklessly and leaned far out.

"Yoo-hoo," she called happily. "Gee, I'm glad you've come. I'll be right down."

Rod took the steps two at a time, and was in the big living-room when Marjorie came flying down the stairs, and in the joy of meeting all else was forgotten for the moment, even the impassioned serenader whose song, unnoted by them, had broken off in the middle of a note.

"Roddy!" cried the girl, holding him off that she might see him to better advantage. "Gee, you look well, boy, and as brown as a regular sheik of the desert. This is the first moment I've been happy——"

She stopped, suddenly realizing the conditions under which he had come.

"Oh, my dear, I'm sorry," she went on contritely. "I forgot for a moment what you've been through the past few days—and poor Uncle Dan! I *wanted* to go to the funeral, Rod, but I didn't dare leave father. He—oh," she interrupted herself impatiently at the sound of light, brisk footsteps ascending the porch steps. "There comes that awful Brazilian dude. Let's beat it into Dad's library —quick!"

Rod was more than willing. He wanted to meet this Señor Peralta; but first he wanted to learn more about him from Marjorie and her father. But fate was against him. Even as they turned, the heavy, somewhat bowed figure of Tremont Marshall appeared on the stairs.

At almost the same moment, a dark, rather stocky girl of marked Spanish type entered the front door from the porch, followed almost immediately by a slender, rather dapper young man, whose dark eyes were half veiled by heavily lashed lids and about whose lips lurked a courteous but faintly satirical smile.

Rod greeted Marshall heartily, noting with regret the elder man's physical degeneration from the sturdy hunter, fisherman, and golf enthusiast of a few years before.

He was in turn presented to Señor

Dorothea and her brother. Neither of the latter impressed him very favorably, but he almost smiled as he thought of the picture his imagination had painted of them.

He could not conceive either, now that he had seen them, in the rôle of reckless adventurer or desperate murderer.

The girl especially was far from his preconceived idea of an adventuress. To begin with, she was certainly not beautiful. And though she could not be called plain, such prettiness as she had was more the freshness of youth than actual fineness of feature.

Doubtless, a very few years would dull the vivid richness of her complexion; the roundness of her face would become heaviness, and the plump figure degenerate to mere dumpiness. Also the down that now cast a barely discernible and attractive shadow on her upper lip would become a well-defined mustache.

Don Carlos seemed a higher or rather more intelligent type than his sister, but scarcely more dangerous. He had seen hundreds of his prototypes—young sons of wealthy parents, slender, immaculate, naïvely vain, posing and lounging before the cafés of Madrid and Seville, and on the boulevards of Paris.

THEY acknowledged Marshall's introduction to Rod courteously, even pleasantly, expressing quite simply and with apparent sincerity their regret for his recent sad loss; nor could he find the slightest cause for suspicion in the attitude of either of them.

They treated him, in fact, exactly as self-assured, well-bred persons would be expected to treat a fellow guest, who was known to be an old and valued friend of their host and hostess, but in whom otherwise they had no personal or particular interest. Shortly thereafter they withdrew to their rooms to prepare for dinner.

As soon as they were gone Marshall turned to Rod with a faint smile.

"They are very punctilious," he observed with an obvious attempt to assume the light and genial manner that was naturally his. "Don Carlos was quite shocked, I think, to find we did not dress for dinner here."

Rod laughed and glanced at his hands, which had suffered from contact with the engine, and the rather disreputable sweater and corduroy trousers he wore.

"I think *I* had better," he returned, picking up his suitcase, "at least a little. If Marjorie will show me——"

The girl seized his arm and grinned at him happily, more her old self than she had been at any time since his return.

"Come on, and I'll show you where you live," she cried. "I forgot you didn't know your way around this place."

She led the way up the winding stairs and opened a door a few feet to the right, and facing them.

"There," she said, switching on the lights. "This has been *Rod's room* since the house was built, and no one has ever occupied it. Dad is next to you and I'm next beyond him. These are the three rooms at the front of the house. Don Carlos is right across the hall from you and Dorothea on the other side of the stairs, across from me. Do you like it?"

"It's fine," he replied, glancing around the comfortably furnished room to which Marjorie had added many touches she knew would appeal to his taste. "Electric lights and everything."

The girl nodded.

"Yes, we have our own plant. Ice plant, too. Old Long Tom runs them; he's a Yankee genius, Rod. Gardener,

boat-keeper, engineer, electrician, furnace man—everything. He's most a hundred I guess, but tough as hickory.

"Hurry now, dear, because dinner will be ready in a few minutes, and afterward *we may* get a chance to talk."

She slipped out of his arms with a swift kiss and vanished in the direction of her room.

CHAPTER V.

A MATTER OF BALLISTICS

ROD closed the door, placed his suitcase on the cretonne-covered bed, opened it and stopped with a little gasp of surprise. His first thought was that in some manner he got hold of the wrong bag.

Certainly he had not packed among the few things he had brought a blue and white-checked gingham apron. Yet that was exactly what lay neatly folded on top.

He looked curiously at the end of the bag where his initials were stenciled in bold letters. It was certainly his, and those were surely his pajamas that peeped from beneath a corner of the apron.

Somewhat gingerly he raised a fold of the gingham, disclosing beneath a serviceable-looking automatic, two clips of cartridges, and an electric flashlight. Moreover, they were his own. The heavy Colt and the flash he had carried as part of his equipment overseas.

A slow grin of understanding spread over his face. Aunt Lucy, of course. It was like her not to waste time in suggestions or argument. She had seen the things on his bureau after he had packed his bag, decided he should have them and just put them in herself, wrapping them in her apron to save his clothes from possible grease. It was typical of her.

He placed the gun and flash on the bureau, which stood between the two daintily draped windows, and proceeded rapidly with his unpacking and toilet.

He was quite ready a few minutes later when Marjorie knocked on his door.

"Coming!" he called in answer, and started toward the door, his arm outstretched toward the electric-light switch beside it.

And then suddenly a roar of sound filled the room, followed instantly by a crash of metal, and a black spot appeared upon the white framework of the door before him.

Rod whirled about, as Marjorie wrenched open the door, and her face, pale and frightened, appeared at his elbow.

He did not see her, however. In two jumps he was at the window and, sweeping aside the dainty Swiss curtains, peered out. There was nothing there; no one. It was dark, for the moon was not yet up, but the stars were brilliant, and the whole expanse of the slightly sloping roof of the porch was visible.

Then his foot struck against something and he looked down. His automatic lay on the floor, and a few feet away on the bright rug lay an empty cartridge. Rod picked up both, a puzzled frown on his face, and glanced at the bullet mark on the door frame.

But he had no time for speculation just then, for Marjorie was in his arms, excitedly demanding reassurance and an explanation. Almost at the same moment, Don Carlos and Donna Dorothea appeared in the doorway, while on the stairs could be heard the footsteps of Tremont Marshall.

Rod looked from one to the other of the faces confronting him, his eyes resting longest on the mildly questioning one of Don Carlos.

"Just an accident," he explained quietly. "Due to my own carelessness. I left my gun on the bureau there"—he pointed to it, and to the windows the curtains of which, in the draught created by the open door, were swinging out into the room—"and the curtains swept it off onto the floor. The safety-catch must have been off so the blame thing exploded. Close, but no harm done. Let's forget it."

He laughed easily, tossed the gun and torch into a drawer, and turning, approached the door.

Don Carlos was examining the bullet-hole with apparent interest; then he glanced back at the billowing curtains, and with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders stood aside to allow Rod to reach the electric-light switch.

For a moment their eyes met and held, and in the Brazilian's was a curious expression. It was puzzled, interrogative, and just a little disturbed, as though he faced something he did not understand—something he was just a little afraid of.

He looked away from Rod, his eyes resting for a second on his sister. But she was listening quietly to Marshall, who was explaining nervously how the shot had startled him. Her face expressed nothing but polite attention and sympathy. Then the whole party trooped downstairs, and as they sauntered informally into the dining-room, Rod ventured a question.

"Are you at all familiar with the science of ballistics, Don Carlos?" he asked casually. "I noticed you studying the bullet-hole with quite a professional interest."

The South American turned and looked at him steadily.

"I know something of it, Señor," he replied quietly, the faint, slightly sardonic smile curving his lips. "I am a graduate of our Brazilian equivalent of your Annapolis, and served for three years in our navy. When my father died, I was unfortunately forced to resign to take charge of his business affairs."

Rod nodded silently and took his seat beside Marjorie, conscious of a number of conflicting emotions. Among them was a reluctant admiration for the "Portugee's" nerve, for the man's admission, coolly and casually made, was illuminating from a number of angles.

It indicated, for one thing, that he probably had the technical knowledge and ability to construct the torpedo that had sent Dan's motorboat to the bottom. It indicated, too, that he must know that Rod's explanation of the "accident" with his gun was a lie.

He must know, also, that not only were the curtains too light and the breeze too gentle to have dragged that heavy weapon off the bureau, but even a casual inspection of the bullet-hole would prove to one familiar with such things that it had entered at right angles—in other words, had been fired while held at an elevation level with his head, and not at an acute upward slant as it would have had it exploded on striking the floor.

A human hand had reached in the window and fired that gun, and dropped it on the floor, and that hand, Rod was convinced, was the same that had fired the torpedo, Don Carlos de Peralta's. There was no one in Marshall's room, the windows scarcely four feet apart.

Recklessly daring as it might be, it was still possible for the man to have reached the porch roof through it, fired the shot and returned the same way to appear behind Marjorie a few seconds later apparently from his own room across the hall.

Rod had little time to analyze the matter, however, for Marjorie kept the conversational ball rolling, and in this Don Carlos ably assisted.

Certainly if he were guilty the man had a phenomenal nerve and poise, and Rod, contrary to all Anglo-Saxon theories of law, had come to the island determined in spite of the purely circumstantial and deductional quality of the evidence to believe him guilty until he was proved innocent. And the happenings of the last hour had added to that determination. In his own mind, in fact, he was convinced. All he needed now was *legal* proof.

That possibly Marjorie could supply, if he *ever*—he thought impatiently—got a chance to talk to her alone.

The dinner ended at last, however, and Marshall presently retired to the library, taking Don Carlos with him. Dorothea after a few moments, with commendable delicacy, excused herself with the excuse of a headache and left them alone.

CHAPTER VI.

ALIBIS

WHEN they had gone both Rod and Marjorie drew deep breaths of relief.

"At last," said the girl, slipping her arm through Rod's and drawing him over to one of the settees that flanked the great stone fireplace. "Roddy, I surely am glad you are here; I've so much to tell you—and so little—but first you must tell me all about everything."

Rod hesitated.

"You tell me first," he replied at last. "Just who and what are these guests of yours and what is the matter with Uncle Tremont?"

Marshall had always been "uncle" to Rod as Dan Pettingill had been to Marjorie.

"I think perhaps if I could answer your first question I might be better able to answer the second," returned the girl. "All I know is that Dad has known them about a year. He says they are clients, but I'm afraid Don Carlos got him into some wildcat scheme—a mine or coffee plantation or something—and he's losing money.

"They are always studying maps and figures and things. He is just worrying himself to death. The doctor says he's on the verge of a nervous breakdown and even forbade his going to Uncle Dan's funeral.

"I was surprised he obeyed him, though. It's the first time, for he's been going down to Boston against orders every few weeks. In fact, he and Don Carlos were there when the accident happened."

Rod started.

"Are you sure of that?" he asked. "The date, I mean?"

Marjorie's eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Why, of course," she answered. "They left the morning before; Dorothea and I ran them over to Jonesboro in the *Water Witch* and saw them off on the train."

"But—but are you sure they went to Boston? That Don Carlos went?" he asked quickly. "Please, dear," he added apologetically, "don't think I'm mad. I have a very real reason for asking these strange questions."

Marjorie looked at him a moment, a puzzled anxious expression on her face, but she answered without hesitation:

"Certainly I'm sure. I phoned Dad at the Palatial that night—I was anxious about him. And I called again in the morning. Don Carlos answered that time, and called Dad to the phone. They said they were leaving on the train, which is due in Jonesboro at about six-thirty; Dorothea and I met them."

"With the *Water Witch?*" he asked eagerly.

"Of course. We went over shortly after I phoned, about eleven, and

had lunch with the Parkers. Then I played tennis all the afternoon until train time. We got the news about Uncle Dan at the Yacht Club on the way to the boat. Dad utterly collapsed."

Rod took the girl's hands in his. "I'm going to ask a few more questions, dear," he said earnestly. "Then I'll explain why I've asked all this. You say you moored the launch in the little harbor off the Yacht Club, about eleven-thirty?"

The girl nodded.

"And you got back to her shortly after seven?"

"Yes."

"Now, during that time did you see her? Would it have been possible for anyone to have taken her and brought her back without your knowing it?"

Marjorie stared at him wonderingly, but she answered categorically:

"Why, no, we didn't *see* her after we moored, until we came back to the club with father and Don Carlos. The Parkers live a mile the other side of the town—inland. And I suppose someone *might* have taken her. There aren't many people at the club week days—and I don't suppose they would notice, particularly, anyway.

"But, Roddy," she added anxiously, "why are you asking me these questions? For Mike's sake, what has happened?"

"Just one more question," he replied. "When my gun went off this evening you were at my door; did you notice whether Don Carlos' door was opened or closed?"

"Why," returned the girl, "it was open. He'd gone downstairs; at least he was on his way. He was just disappearing around the turn as I came out of my room."

"Are you sure it was he?" persisted Rod, disappointment in his tone. "Not someone else—a servant or his sister or——"

"Oh gracious!" cried Marjorie, exasperated. "Roddy, I'll really cuss in a minute. Of course I'm sure. The light isn't very strong in the hall, but I couldn't mistake a man for a woman.

"Besides he came bounding up again when the shot went off and I opened your door. I heard him, and I wont answer another question until you tell me what in heck it's all about."

ROD drew a long breath, indicative in this case of disgust and disappointment.

"I'm going to tell you, dear," he said. "It will shock you, but I must, for I need your help. But no one else must know it under any circumstance."

And beginning with his interview with his Aunt Lucy on the tower of Pettingill Cove, he told her everything he had learned, surmised, or suspected.

"So you see," he added dejectedly, "I am just where I started. The only possible suspect—this Brazilian, Don Carlos—has an air-tight alibi in both cases."

Marjorie had not once interrupted him during the recital of his story. Only the paleness of her face, and the occasional tightening of her hands in his, betrayed the shock his revelations were to her.

When he had finished she remained for a moment silently staring into the fire.

"Roddy, it's—it's horrible," she said at last; "but suppose you *are* mistaken in thinking the accident to your gun not an accident, isn't it possible you have been too hasty in accepting the theory that the first attack was directed against *you?* Why is it more probable that an enemy of yours did it, than one of Uncle Dan's or even of Ben Hammond's?"

"Ben!" Rod exclaimed in sur-

prise. "Why, I never thought of him. No," he went on after a moment's consideration, "that wont do at all. Poor Ben was utterly harmless—an overgrown boy scarcely out of school. And as Aunt Lucy says, Uncle Dan's enemies, if he had any, were all honest fishermen or sailors, who would have taken it out in cursing him to his face.

"I'm afraid she's right, dear. This crime has a distinctly foreign trade-mark, and Don Carlos is the only foreigner around here—or is he? By George, I didn't think of that. Could he have had an accomplice, I wonder? That would cover both attempts."

Marjorie shook her head.

"It doesn't seem probable," she said thoughtfully. "So far as I know, he had never been in North America before last winter, when he came to see father, who had done business with his father in Rio.

"He came up here to us two months ago, and except to go to Boston with father or to the club or some affair at the home of one of our friends, with his sister and me, he hasn't been off the island. He's *never* left it alone, and no one but our friends or some of the townspeople have been *here*."

"He might have, nevertheless," insisted Rod. "He could have seen him when he was in Boston. He knew, didn't he, from my letters and cable to you when I would arrive in New York, and of my original plan to go straight home from the ship, and come to you the next day? There was no reason why you should have been secretive about it."

The girl nodded assent and Rod went on eagerly:

"And my wire from New York of the change in my plan couldn't have reached you until after he and Uncle Tremont had left for Boston. Marge, I'm more sure than ever that that damned 'Portugee' is guilty."

MARJORIE looked at him, her eyes reflecting the doubt, perplexity and dread that gripped her.

"I don't know," she replied, "I don't know what to think. It's the uncertainty, the mystery of it, that makes it so appalling. If we only knew what we were fighting, and why. I don't like Don Carlos, Rod. I think he's a vain, silly creature socially, and quite likely unscrupulous in business. But somehow I can't see him either as a doer or instigator of actual violence.

"I like Dorothea—I'm sorry for her. She lost her twin brother and her fiancé in the war and is an unhappy, moody creature. I think she must have been nice before that. But her brother! He——" She broke off suddenly, hesitated, and then asked a question: "Rod, are you going to tell the police about this?"

"I am *not*," he answered sharply. "Not yet, anyway. I don't want the murderer put on his guard. I don't want anyone to know we even *suspect* the affair was anything but an accident."

"Then you wont have to say anything to Dad about it, either," she said with a sigh of relief. "A shock like that in his present condition would be terrible."

CHAPTER VII.

THE THIRD STRIKE

THREE hours later Rod sat by his gable window, his pipe cold in his hand, looking somberly out over the moon-silvered sea. The house was silent and dark; presumably everyone else was asleep, as he would gladly have been, for he was very tired, had not the events of the day parading in endless repetition through his brain prevented.

His room was at the extreme end of the building, and from where he sat he could see through and over the thin fringe of trees the little cove, laying like a silver mirror under the white light of the moon.

Three boats were wholly visible, an old dory of the type used by fishermen on the banks; a small cat-boat and the *Midget*. He could see only a few feet of the bow of the *Water Witch*, the greater part of her being concealed by the bulk of the boathouse.

For a long time he sat staring moodily at the trim lines of the big motorboat's bows. If she could only speak, tell whose hand had driven her on the mission of death only a few days before. By God, perhaps she *could!* Rod sat up suddenly alert.

Why had he not thought before to search the *Water Witch*. There, if anywhere, he might find a clue—something that would betray the sinister presence that had transformed the peaceful pleasure craft into an instrument of violent death. He would do it now. The flashlight would provide sufficient light, and it would not be visible from the house, for the boathouse made an effective screen.

Rod, cheered by the thought of action, futile though it was likely to be, rose hurriedly and was turning from the window, when suddenly he froze—motionless, tense, alert, every nerve on edge. He "set" like a finely-bred bird-dog scenting game.

Something was wrong down there among the boats! He could not say that he had definitely heard or seen anything, but he sensed it—a vague, subtle change, that he was acutely conscious of but unable to place.

The silence was still intense, broken only by the gentle rhythmic moan and sigh of the light surf on the other side of the island. The moon still silvered the mirror-like surface of the cove, throwing into clean-cut relief the higher outlines of the boats, but leaving the rest of them a mere blur of shadow.

Rod stood tensely staring, longing vainly for the fine night-glass that hung so uselessly in his room in Pettingill Cove. Why hadn't Aunt Lucy put that in, too. And then suddenly he saw what it was that had startled him—a thing so vague, so tenuous that had not his subconscious mind picked it up it probably would not have registered consciously at all.

There was a change in the sharply defined shadow of the *Midget*. On what had been only an unbroken, sweeping line there was now a hump, denser, less sharply defined—and a hump that was not still, but wavered, and pulsed and writhed with slight but obvious motion.

It was weird, uncanny; but Rod was not of a type to be easily frightened by freakish shadows. Almost at once he realized what it was. Someone—someone wearing dark clothing, and whose face and hands must also be covered, for no faintest glimmer of white showed anywhere—was crouching in the cockpit by the engine. For what purpose?

ROD did not stop to analyze the night worker's probable motives. Seizing his flashlight, he stepped out of the window, slid softly down the roof of the porch, swung to the ground, and darting across the lawn, sprinted rapidly, noiselessly for the boathouse float.

There in the shadow of the boathouse he paused to reconnoiter, and rub his eyes in amazement. From the moment of turning from the window for his flashlight, to his arrival to the corner of the boathouse overlooking the float and the little cove, not over two minutes had elapsed.

But now clear in the bright moonlight, and not over a hundred feet away, the *Midget* lay exactly as he had left her. No dark figure crouched in the open cockpit; nothing whatever out of the ordinary was visible.

Rod's eyes ran rapidly over the float and the cove. Nothing. His dingy, the tender of the *Water Witch*, and another small rowboat, were tied to the float, in the same position they had been when he landed there a few hours before. Two canoes, bottom up, lay on the float itself. The position of the moored boats was unchanged.

Rod was puzzled and vaguely uneasy. It was barely possible, of course, that the moonlight had deceived him, but he did not believe it. Had the boats had the slightest motion from wind or tide he would not have trusted so implicitly his eye.

But the little cove, almost landlocked and on the lee side of the island, was as still as a millpond. Further, the tide was at the slack of the ebb, and as to the air, the dead calm that often precedes the springing up of the dawn breeze prevailed.

But one explanation seemed possible. In spite of his speed and silence he had been seen or heard, and the intruder had immediately slipped overboard, and swimming rapidly, under water perhaps, had gained the shore before he, Rod, reached the shadow of the boathouse.

It would have required great skill and infinite caution to do this without imparting the slightest motion to the *Midget* or creating a ripple of the mirror-like surface, to betray his presence. But it was possible.

Perhaps the fellow had not attempted the shore. Perhaps even now he was lurking behind one of the boats or perhaps on the further side of the *Midget* herself. If so——

Coming to a sudden decision, he strode with no further attempt at concealment down to the float. Stepping into the dingy, he sculled rapidly around the cove, passing under the stern of each boat so that his eyes might sweep both sides at once, and throwing the powerful ray of his torch into the cockpit and cabin of each.

But the search was fruitless, and presently, sorely puzzled, he gave it up and skulled slowly to the side of the *Midget*.

"Either that bird is a fish, and swam all the way ashore under water and in record time, or I've been seeing things," he told himself disgustedly, playing the flashlight into the cockpit. "What would anyone be doing on this little overgrown rowboat anyway? My nerves——!"

IN sudden excitement he gripped the gunwale of the motorboat and stepped into the cockpit. Someone *had* been there after all. On the floor-boards, in front of the engine—boards that had been as dry as a chip when he had moored the boat at dusk—was a dark, irregular stain of dampness.

Someone in wet clothing had crouched there—and further, several smaller blots—irregular, shapeless, but still unmistakably the print of a stockinged foot led back to the stern, over which the intruder had doubtless slipped.

But what was his purpose? What had he been doing to the engine? Rod crouched before it perplexedly. It looked all right superficially. What object would there be in putting it out of commission, anyway?

And then suddenly he noticed something that brought him forward onto his knees, questing here and there, following wires to the places they should go and to places they should *not*.

Presently he rose and looked through the fringe of trees to the house looming dark behind them.

"The slick little devil," he muttered with a grim smile as he stepped

into the dingy and thoughtfully skulled back to shore.

As he reached the porch of the house and was about to swarm sailor-fashion up a pillar to regain his room, Marjorie rose from a hammock and came toward him.

"Roddy," she whispered anxiously, "what's happened? I heard you go out by your window, and I've been waiting for you."

"Here—on the porch?" he asked. "How long?"

"Ever since you went," she replied. "At least I only stopped to slip something on. What is it?"

"Nothing much," he returned dryly. "Only someone has a highly cultivated interest in engines, and has been experimenting with the *Midget's.*"

"Roddy! What do you mean? Did they do anything to it?"

"Not much. Only when next I turned her over I'd have received a beautiful spark. The ingenious thing is that it would have been in the *gas tank* instead of where it belonged. And to make sure I shouldn't be disappointed, they had removed a quarter of the gas I'd filled it with at Jonesboro, and punched a couple of holes around where they wouldn't show, to give it a nice mixture of air."

"Rod!" cried the girl dismayed. "You mean it would have exploded the tank? Who could have done it?"

"Exactly," he answered grimly. "It's a much better idea than the torpedo trick, but I think the same mind conceived them both. I did a little job of my own with a wire clipper, however, so that's all right. Now you run along to bed, dear, while I do a little second-story work here. My door is locked, so I'll have to go back the way I came."

TO swing up to the low roof of the porch was a simple task, and a moment later Rod was once more in his room, but sleep was farthest from his thoughts.

Waiting until he heard Marjorie's light steps pass his room and her door close, he softly unlocked his own and stepped into the hall.

The front room next to his was, Marjorie had said, Tremont Marshall's; his was the one beyond that. Don Carlos' was directly across the hall from his; Dorothea's on the opposite side of the stairs, facing Marjorie's.

On tiptoe he crossed the hall and laid his ear against the Brazilian's door. The man was there; there was no question of that. His deep, regular breathing was distinctly audible.

Cautiously Rod turned the knob, and finding the door unlocked opened it a few inches and peered in. Don Carlos—plainly visible in the moonlight—lay relaxed, one pajamaed arm flung out in the abandon of sleep. Certainly if he were not asleep he was giving a most convincing imitation of it.

Rod closed the door carefully and stood for a moment, a puzzled frown on his brow, trying to reconcile a dozen conflicting facts. It looked like another alibi. But was it?

With the exception of Tremont Marshall himself, Long Tom, the doddering old man who acted as gardener and general help, and himself, Don Carlos was, or should be, the only other man on the island, which was four miles offshore from the mainland.

To slip out of the house was a simple matter; any of the back windows on the lower floor would have provided an easy exit and entrance, and Marjorie wouldn't have seen the man, for he naturally would have avoided the grounds in front of the house, overlooked by his and the family's windows.

No, the alibi was a flimsy one this time. His face grim, Rod turned back toward his room, and as he did so the moonlight slanting in the hall window glinted upon something at the head of the stairs—something that sparkled like a diamond on the waxed hardwood floor.

Silently he stepped toward it, slipping the catch on his flashlight as he did so. It was a drop of water—more, a half dozen of them. Swiftly he stooped, and touching one with his finger, conveyed it to his mouth. It was salt.

Someone wet with salt water had stood there a moment or two very recently—perhaps listening to his whispered conversation with Marjorie just outside the open front door. Rod's grim frown gave place to a smile equally grim as he turned with sudden decision and strode swiftly but silently back to Don Carlos' door.

CHAPTER VIII

A MIDNIGHT VISIT

WITH his hand on the knob, Rod paused. His first impulse had been to go straight into the room, jerk the Brazilian out of bed and force a confession from him. But almost immediately he saw the folly of such a move, backed only by the very flimsy evidence he possessed. Yet he must get into the room; see the fellow more closely.

He did not expect to find anything so crude as wet clothing about; Don Carlos was far too clever for that. But a man who had so recently been in the water must show evidence of it. If he could only see him closely in the light.

Rod hesitated a moment, then, drawing his pipe from his pocket, he set the door slightly ajar and knocked lightly. Somewhat to his surprise, the form on the bed responded immediately. There was no attempt to counterfeit a deep sleep.

Instead, at the first knock, Don Carlos rolled over and, raising himself on his elbow, looked at the door tentatively as though not quite sure whether he had heard a sound or not. It was so genuine, so perfectly natural a gesture for one aroused from sleep in this manner, that Rod was puzzled. Either the man was a finished and amazingly clever actor, or he had not been out of his bed.

But Rod had started something. It was up to him to finish it.

Opening the door a trifle further, he spoke Don Carlos' name softly.

Immediately a pair of pajamaed legs swung out of bed, and lithely and swiftly as a panther the Brazilian stepped to the door.

"Ah," he said smiling. "It is Señor Pettingill. I was not sure I was not dreaming. Will you be pleased to enter, Señor?"

He stepped back, snapping on the lights as he spoke, and, throwing a gay dressing gown over his shoulders, looked at his late visitor with polite interrogation.

Rod held up the pipe, matching Don Carlos' smile with one, if not equally friendly, at least a fair imitation of it.

"Sorry if I woke you," he said, "but I'm a good deal of a night-bird, and in some way I seem to be shy of tobacco. I thought you might have some."

He was looking closely at the man as he spoke, seeking some tell-tale mark that would connect him with the night-worker on the motorboat. But there was nothing.

On the contrary, his appearance—the disordered but perfectly dry hair; the immaculately manicured hands, were almost conclusive proofs that he was *not* the man. Once again the alibi was complete.

Don Carlos appeared genuinely regretful as he shook his head in reply to Rod's request.

"My dear fellow," he said, "I am really sorry, but I do not smoke a pipe—cigarettes or cigars, yes; I have them in abundance, but not tobacco for a pipe."

He moved to a table by his bed as he spoke and threw open a humidor.

Seeing that his visit was likely to accomplish nothing but the more complete demolition of all his suspicions, Rod was now only anxious to get away.

"Thanks, just the same," he replied, "but I've just remembered that Uncle Tremont usually keeps a jar on his desk. I'll just slip down to the library and get some. Stupid of me to have disturbed you. I hope you will pardon it. Goodnight."

HE turned away, and his hand was already on the knob of the door when Don Carlos' soft voice stopped him.

"Señor Pettingill," the Brazilian said, and there was in his voice that peculiar combination of subtle irony and deep sadness that Rod had noticed before, "was it *only* to ask me for tobacco that you came to me tonight?"

Rod turned slowly and faced him. What the devil did the fellow mean? Certainly he did not expect Rod to consult *him* in regard to the three attempts of assassination.

For him to display the slightest knowledge of them would be more than reckless daring; it would be equivalent to a confession. What else, then?

Was it possible the bounder expected to be called to account for serenading Marjorie? No. Rod acquitted him of that, too.

For a long minute the two stood looking at each other, eye to eye. They were to a certain extent at opposite poles in temperament, viewpoint, everything that makes for understanding between human beings. Don Carlos was all Latin; Spanish to his fingertips. Rod, by education, environment, and *half* by birth was Anglo-Saxon—a Maine Yankee of the Yankees; but in him there was also Spanish blood. It made for him and Don Carlos a point of contact; gave him an unconscious subtle understanding and sympathy. Reluctantly, he admitted that whatever else the man might be he was a gentleman—according to his lights.

Rod broke the silence at last.

"Why did you think I came?" he asked at last levelly.

Don Carlos smiled slightly and shrugged.

"Señor," he replied, "you asked me a question in the dining-room, which I answered quite frankly. I *am* familiar with ballistics, Señor. I am an expert, in fact, as I indicated to you then. You must know therefore that I am perfectly aware that your automatic was not fired by accident. Knowing that I knew, I thought you might wish to discuss it with me."

Rod smiled grimly.

"*Accuse* you of it, perhaps?" he replied curtly.

Don Carlos' eyes opened wide in astonishment; then he laughed quite gayly.

"But no, señor," he returned. "How could that possibly be? You must know that I was on the stairs but a few feet behind Señorita Marjorie when the shot was fired—from the window. Besides, my dear friend, what possible motive could I have?"

"I wish I knew," responded Rod a bit naïvely; and again Don Carlos laughed softly.

But almost immediately he sober-

ed and only the faintly satirical smile lingered.

"Señor Pettingill," he said gravely. "Let us be frank. We do not, I think, like each other. It is perhaps not unnatural. But you must in common sense acquit me of the attempt on your life tonight. It is equally clear, however, that you have an enemy—a dangerous one who might renew his attempt. Would it not be wiser to go away? No, please allow me to explain.

"I do not suggest that *you* should run away, but you are the object of this pursuit. There are two ladies here, my sister, who is far from well, and the Señorita Marjorie. Is it fair for you to lead your pursuer to *their* door?

"Even if they were not personally harmed—which they might well be by such a desperate assassin—the shock of another attack—a possibly successful one—I think you must see my point, Señor."

For a moment Rod was too stunned by the effrontery of the suggestion, specious as it was and considering its source, to be able to reply. But finally he pulled himself together and managed a faintly satirical smile that matched Don Carlos'.

"No," he said slowly. "I do *not* see your point—quite. I'll have to think it over. Good-night."

And turning abruptly, he went out without further words—to think it over was exactly all he wanted to do.

WHAT was the fellow up to now? Why did he want him out of the way? Could his accomplice act more freely somewhere else—at Pettingill Cove or in the city? It was a puzzle.

But of one thing he was convinced. Don Carlos was behind all three of the attempts on his life. He did not do the dirty work personally, perhaps, but he was the instigator, the principal.

Only two things were needed now, a convincing motive and some connecting link—a concrete link that might be used as legal evidence between Don Carlos and one of the three attempts.

CHAPTER IX

MARSHALL SUPPLIES A MOTIVE

ROD Pettingill did not sleep that night. He sat at his window until the stars paled, and the silvery night turned gray with the advance of day. Then the chill ghost-army of the dawn-mist rolled in and wove a writhing phantom shroud of fog over everything.

Rod rose and slipping out of his clothes put on a bathing-suit. He felt numb, heavy, unable to coördinate his thoughts or see things in a proper perspective. The loss of sleep did not bother him at all, but the hours of mental strain were beginning to tell. A plunge in the sea might clear his brain.

And it did. A half-hour later, rubbed down and dressed in fresh clothing, he felt himself as refreshed as if he had slept normally all night, and ready once more to take up the problem that faced him.

He had learned, too, during his brief swim, the method of the night raider's escape. It had not been apparent from his position in the dingy but in the water it was clear enough. The stern of the *Midget* was less than fifty feet from the end of the float—not a great distance for a strong and expert swimmer to negotiate entirely under water.

Furthermore, between the flooring of the float and the water was a space of at least six inches—ample head and breathing space.

Once under it the man could without difficulty have swum and waded ashore, passed directly *under* the boathouse, which was built upon piles, and so reached the house without once being visible to a person in any of the boats in the Cove.

But again if the man were not Don Carlos—and Rod was quite convinced that he was not—this discovery counted for little. An accomplice would not have to go near the house.

Assuming there was one, he would have had to come to the island in a boat unless he could swim the four miles from the mainland, which would be possible enough but doubtful; and if so that boat would logically be hidden on the further side of the island.

How then account for the drops of salt water at the head of the stairs, unless the accomplice had had the amazing hardihood to come to Don Carlos' room to report, a supposition that seemed scarcely creditable.

With an exclamation of impatience Rod gave it up and glanced at his watch. It was still very early—not yet six o'clock. Even the servants were probably not up yet. No chance of a cup of coffee. But he had no desire to stay in his room. He'd take a closer look at the *Water Witch* by daylight.

But as he approached the boathouse, a tall figure lounging in a steamer-chair uncoiled itself and sauntered to meet him.

"Hello," greeted this unexpected apparition, grinning. "I kind of thought you'd be back this way soon."

"Tom!" cried Rod eagerly. "Good man! You must have made a record job of it, and you must have something to report or you wouldn't be here."

"Right-o, Cap," drawled Tom Curtis, using one of the Anglicisms his service with the Canadians had grafted onto his Maine dialect. "Just got here a few minutes ago. The *Sylph's* anchored on the other side of the island. Thought I'd best report to you kind of quietly first. Saw you come in from your swim, but didn't want to hail you. Sort of calculated you'd be out again soon."

Rod nodded silently. The best method with Tom was to let him take his own course.

"Well, we got Dan's boat up," Curtis went on. "I guess your Aunt Lucy's right. She was most tore in half when the gas tank let go; but there's signs of an external explosion too—more than signs.

"We got a piece of the torpedo, too—the propeller and part of the clockwork. Mighty slick job that little machine, but it wasn't made hereabouts. The clock them works came out of was made in Rio de Janeiro. Says so on 'em."

"Tom! You're sure of that?" cried Rod excitedly. "Then, by Jove, we have that "Portugee" nailed—alibis or no alibis! Listen now. Get aboard your *Sylph* and get to Jonesboro. See the sheriff or chief of police or whatever they have there, and lay the whole matter before him—no, wait. I must talk to Uncle Tremont first. You go aboard and wait there. Can you see any part of the house from your boat?"

"No," replied Tom. "The ground rises some that side and it's wooded. But these folks don't know anything about me. Suppose I come around this side in about half an hour—just steam slowly by.

"You be around on the float there, and if you have your hat on I'll go on and get the Sheriff. If you have it off, I'll lay to like I had some engine trouble. If you want me to come ashore, just take out your handkerchief and shake it. That all right?"

"Fine," agreed Rod. "Go to it,

Tom. I'll go in and see Mr. Marshall."

IT was an unpleasant task Rod had set for himself, but as it turned out he was not called upon to perform it. Marjorie met him on the porch as he reached the house.

"I've told Dad everything," she announced. "And I'm glad I did. He took it much better than I expected and—he wants to see you."

"But I thought you didn't want him told yet?" exclaimed Rod both surprised and considerably relieved.

"I changed my mind," returned the girl calmly. "I got thinking it over, and since he would have to be told soon anyway, I thought it would be better for me to break it to him now. Will you go in and see him? He's in the library."

Rod drew a breath of relief.

"Yes, at once," he replied with a grateful smile. "I think you were quite right."

He found Tremont Marshall standing before the unlightened open fireplace, his hands clasped behind his back and his head bent in thought. He looked much more his old self than the evening before. His face was still drawn, but it had lost its haggard appearance; his shoulders were erect and squared. He looked like a man who after weeks of uncertainty and doubt had at last reached a conclusion.

"Come in, Rod," he greeted the young man calmly. "Sit down while I unburden my soul. Marjorie has told me everything and I have told her all I am now going to tell you."

He paused to bite the end from a cigar and light it.

"It's a horrible tragedy," he went on, "this thing that happened at Pettingill Cove. It has been a great shock to me—and a tonic. I have been suffering from what a psychoanalyst would call some sort of a complex.

"I was called upon to face a situation and I couldn't, consequently it overwhelmed me. In the face of this tragedy it has dwindled to insignificance. I can see it now, serious as it is, in its proper focus.

"Briefly, Rod, the facts are these: Some years ago I invested heavily in a coffee plantation in Brazil near Santos. My partner and resident manager was a fine and honest gentleman, Don Juan de Peralta. While he lived things were prosperous in the extreme.

"Then came his death and the War. His son Don Carlos succeeded him, and from then on—trouble.

"I poured good money in to save the bad, and then when things were at their worst, when it looked as though everything would be swept away for the lack of capital to tide it over, you became of age and the Spanish lawyers who held your mother's estate for you paid over to me, as your attorney of record, nearly two hundred thousand dollars. Rod, I have sunk that, too, in what I am afraid is a vain attempt to save things."

Rod laughed.

"But, Uncle Tremont," he said, his tone divided between surprise and embarrassment, "you certainly were welcome to it—you know that. The money meant nothing to me. Besides you had my power of attorney to act for me in that matter or any other. If your investment turned out badly——"

"Sophistry, my boy," interrupted Marshall, smiling. "I tried to argue that way to myself. Of course I know, could I have asked you, you would have loaned me the money gladly. Also, in a strictly *legal* sense I was within my rights; morally however, it was little short of—embezzlement.

"Now," he went on, ignoring Rod's attempted protest, "this problem of mine has faded to insignificance. It can be taken up later. The only important thing is the apprehension of the perpetrator of the three attempts on your life."

"Don Carlos," asserted Rod decidedly.

"I'm afraid so," assented Marshall reluctantly. "I——"

"I'm sure of it," interrupted Rod eagerly, and went on to tell of the arrival of Tom Curtis, and the results of the raising of Dan's sunken motorboat. "It seems as conclusive as circumstantial evidence can be," he concluded. "The only thing lacking is an adequate motive."

"Which I can perhaps supply," said Marshall sadly. "Rod, you probably do not know that your maternal grandfather, Don Roderigo Arteaga, for whom you are named, is still alive. He is a very old man and has been senile for many years. If he did not make a will before becoming incompetent, he cannot now, and you would be his heir.

"The estate is large even by American standards, but if you were out of the way it would go to your cousin, Don Carlos Peralta whose mother was a younger sister of your mother's. Perhaps Carlos knows there is no will."

"But Great Scott," exclaimed Rod, "Marjorie never mentioned this."

"She did not know it," replied Marshall. "Neither did I until a few weeks ago. Don Juan's wife died many years ago; Don Juan himself knew nothing of my connection with you, nor did Don Carlos, until your name came up in the course of conversation here in this room, shortly after we arrived from Boston. He begged me then for reasons he refused to state, but assured me he would explain later, not to mention the connection to Dorothea or Marjorie. I did not."

Rod sprang to his feet.

"That settles it!" he exclaimed. "Tom is waiting for my signal to go for the police and I'm going to give it to him now. Cousin or not, Carlos is the murderer of Dan Pettingill and he's going to pay for it!"

"Señor, your pardon!"

Startled, Rod and Marshall whirled as one toward the soft voice that spoke from the open window. Don Carlos stood on the porch looking in quietly. His face was very pale, but a quaint, slightly satirical smile still clung to his lips, and the hand he raised in quick semi-salute did not tremble.

CHAPTER X

A FAMILY AFFAIR

"YOUR pardon," Don Carlos repeated. "I had come down early in the hope of seeing for a little moment the Donna Marjorie alone. I was here when she came to you, Señor Marshall. I regret; I could not but hear what you had just said."

Rod took a step toward the window.

"And having heard, what have you to say?" he asked harshly.

"I am sorry, Señor, my cousin, Don Roderigo," replied Don Carlos softly. "I have but little to say. The torpedo you describe—I invent. She was a model—what you call a working model, complete in all parts, but with the detonator detached. You will not believe, if I say I have no idea how she got out of my laboratory in Santos.

"Also you will perhaps not believe (but this is easy to prove) that our grandfather, Don Roderigo, has made a will long ago. Neither you nor I share in that estate, my cousin. For the rest, I say it is not neces-

sary to bring here your policeman. I will go quietly with you to him."

"Carlos," asked Marshall gravely, "is this a confession?"

The Brazilian bowed very slightly, the faint smile deepening.

"Señor Marshall," he replied gently, "I thank you for the regret in your voice and I confess—nothing. In fact I deny most solemnly. But I have the reason. I see that the case is, as you say, black against me. I submit to the disagreeable and inevitable."

Fortunately, Dorothea was still in her room so she could know nothing of the events of the morning. Marjorie was instructed to tell her only that her brother, Marshall, and Rod, had gone to the mainland on business, and a few minutes later, Rod having signaled the tug, a boat conveyed them aboard.

And there a surprise awaited Rod, for the first person to greet him as he stepped aboard was Lucy Pettingill. Aunt Lucy, in a black silk dress and bonnet, with a crocheted reticule dangling from her arm, as though she was about to make one of her semi-annual trips to Portland.

"If you'd a-been *all* Pettingill," she explained tartly, "I wouldn't have thought of comin', but things bein' as they are I wanted to be along to see you didn't make no 'Portugee' mistakes. Who's this feller?"

Rod explained grimly, and Lucy looked at Don Carlos with interest.

"Humph!" she said at last. "Well, he might have something to do with it, though I doubt it; don't look to have the gumption. But——"

SHE broke off suddenly and hurriedly fumbling in her reticule produced a pair of binoculars. The tug was well on her way by this time and a half mile from the island; but as Lucy turned her glasses that way, all saw the slender form clad in sweater and knickers that rushed out upon the float and plunging into the water swam with swift, strong strokes to the *Water Witch*.

A moment later, the throb of the engine came to them as the powerful motor sent the boat speeding after them; but it was not before a second figure that had closely pursued the first had had time to unfasten the dingy, and with swift strokes paddle to the boat and board it just as it got under way.

"As I was sayin'," continued Aunt Lucy, calmly lowering her glasses, "*this* feller *may* have somethin' to do with it, but the one that shot that torpeder is runnin' th' *Water Witch* now."

Rod seized the glass and leveled it at the rapidly approaching boat.

"My God, it's Dorothea," he cried, "and Marjorie is with her! You're mistaken, Aunt Lucy. You must be."

"I don't make mistakes, Rod Pettingill," she replied acidly. "You know that. I told you I was looking at the *Witch* with a glass—that glass — when Dan was killed — and saw who done it. If that feller's name is Dorothea—Dorothea murdered Dan and Ben Hammond. Lay to, Tom, and let him come up."

Tom obeyed, and a few seconds later the motorboat ran alongside and Dorothea scrambled aboard.

"My brother!" she gasped, clinging to him. "Where you take him? What is all this? He do nothing? He know nothing. It was I—Dorothea. I, alone. You"—she turned fiercely to Rod—"you call me a murderess! I try to kill you—yes!

"Twice—three times, I try and fail, and kill two innocents by mistake. For that I have regret. But you kill the two I love best in all the world. My twin brother—my lover. You kill them. You—*you* are the murderer!

"Carlos, he know nothing. I take

his torpedo model. I smuggle it into this country. I think maybe I find the murderer of my loved ones here. And I have failed—failed."

SUDDENLY, without warning she crumpled and but for Don Carlos' supporting arms would have fallen to the deck. Tenderly he bore her unconscious form into the cabin and laid it gently on a locker.

"She has fainted," he said quietly. "You have heard, señors. The matter is in your hands."

Rod was puzzled. Was the girl confessing to shield her brother? He turned to Marjorie, who was supporting Dorothea's head.

"How could she have done it?" he asked. "She was playing tennis with you all that afternoon."

Marjorie shook her head.

"I told you *I* was playing tennis," she replied. "Dorothea went back to Jonesboro, to do some shopping. I paid no special attention. The *Water Witch* is very fast. She *could* have made it—and uncle Dan *had* been to the island. She knew him and his boat and that you were expected. I found your wife changing your plans at home when we got back."

"But I still don't understand," persisted Rod, bewildered. "Who am I supposed to have killed?"

"Do you remember, señor," replied Don Carlos quietly, "two days before the Armistice a scout plane you brought down in flames over the French front? The pilot was Don Louis de la Granda, a Brazilian whose mother was a German. He was my sister's fiancé and my friend. His observer was her brother and mine—her twin."

"But—my God—that was a fair fight. The chances of war."

Carlos smiled sadly.

"True, señor cousin. Me—I understand. I hold no, as you say, grudge. That is why I try to get you to leave until I can get my sister home—for your sake and hers—for I suspect that it is she who have fired your gun from the window. The other attempts, I assure you, I know nothing of. The gun is the first hint I have.

"It was wrong, señor, but—can you ask logic or philosophy of a woman at the side of her dead lover? My sister has never been quite the same since. She is not, so a doctor would say, insane, but—she has not been—quite normal.

"I mention it as a fact, señors," he added a little stiffly, "not in extenuation. The matter is, as I say, in your hands."

For a moment no one spoke; they sat looking at each other, uncertain, questioning, until the silence grew oppressive.

"Eh! Legally——" began Marshall. heavily, but Marjorie interrupted:

"I don't know what the law is," she said sharply. "As Carlos says, the matter is in our hands. I say it should remain there."

Lucy Pettingill rose suddenly and came to her side.

"I always held Marjorie was a sensible girl."

She averred a faint smile curving her thin lips.

"There is nothing to be gained by bringin' in th' neighbors. This is a family matter all around. We'll take her back to the island until she gets her senses. Then you two go home."

She dropped her hard, toil-worn hand on Don Carlos' shoulder. "I ain't never held much by 'Portugeese,'" she added, "though my nephew is half one; but I guess we can trust her to *you*. Is there anyone thinks different?"

No one did. They seldom did when Lucy Pettingill "put her foot down," and in this case no one wanted to, Rod least of all.

A Throw-Back to Romany

By JOSEPHINE BENTHAM

OLD Morlock was dead.

The fact of his being no longer alive was not extraordinary, because he was the sort of person of whom one says, casually, dabbing salt on the celery, "Well, Old Morlock's dead, so I hear."

But the manner of his dying was certainly unusual—there, crumpled into a black heap behind the counter of his miserable little shop—the hilt of a dagger gleaming upward from his breast, like a horrible, fascinating exclamation point, studded with rubies and sapphires and big yellow diamonds.

So the people who lived in Morlock's block heard about his death and the manner of it. And those who were in the least romantic or morbid or imaginative could scarcely resist peering into the windows of Old Morlock's shop, although the dead man had long since been carted away by an efficient police, and prodded, and frowned over, and laid out very professionally.

But through the rain-streaked windows of the second-hand shop one could still see the things which the dead man had intended to sell, and forthwith the things took on a ghastly romance of their own.

There were violins, strung up from the ceiling like sausages, odd gimcracks of leather and redwood and mother o' pearl, cameras and bangles and gilt-framed mottoes, idols and medals and rosaries from God knows where.

Morlock, as a matter of fact, had not been *old* at all. But he was the type to whom one gives the prefix with contempt, not with affection.

Morlock had been somewhere in his forties, an obese man with seedy clothes creasing into folds of flesh, with none of the fat man's geniality, nor of the fat man's occasional dignity.

His small pale eyes had been deep-set, swimming in an unpleasant moisture; and very slyly and warily they had peered upon the unfortunate part of the world which had had need of bargaining over his counter.

No one cared, of course, that Old Morlock was dead. No one would even have known his name save that the sign over his shop announced *Morlock—Loans* in twisted green letters—and the flat-dwellers and storekeepers in that particular block in San Francisco were often in search of loans.

Certainly no one had ever visited him in his pig-sty of a bedroom over the shop. The bootleggers didn't know him, and the newsboys didn't know him; nor even the affable Maggie O'Halloran, who shuffled daily half the length of Kearny Street with a trayful of pencils and shoe laces.

But it was the manner of his going.

A newspaper man got the story; wrung it out of the dagger, you might

have said, like a great gleaming drop of blood—more truly, out of a certain woman who lived in a Nob Hill apartment and had a taste for sherry in her morning grapefruit.

But he didn't disclose what he knew until that fastidious lady was well out of the way of other daggers, not so romantic—until all evidence in the matter would have turned to dust at touch of the police.

A FAIR-HAIRED boy, with a mouth that turned upward at the corners, sat with his legs swinging from the oldest, blackest pier on the water front. Before him the blue bay spread out enchantingly, and far off to his left it slipped from its moorings of brown hills and black piers through the Golden Gate out into the great waters of the western sea.

Across this bay the absurd ferry-boats made their voyages, and at clean right angles to the ferry-boats, more imposing vessels swept by with cumbrous grace.

It is understandable, then, that in all the world there was no more wonderful city than this San Francisco that sprawled on its hills by the bay. And in this city there was no one more radiantly in love with life than this lad who dangled his legs from the blackest pier.

Someone's foot crunched down on a peanut shell that he had tossed over his shoulder, and the boy glanced lazily behind him. Then he grinned; for the cruncher of the peanut shell was a quite comprehensible girl in a shabby blue coat and a scarlet tam o' shanter, and her mouth was brightened beautifully with drug-store lipstick.

But *her* smile was shy, and there is nothing on earth so warming as a shy smile that isn't really afraid.

"Nice day," he said.

"Sure is. Like to go sailing on a day like this—hm?"

"Sure would. Darn nice out—out there."

He gestured with a hand that included Hunter's Point, Honolulu, the Far East and all the world beyond.

"Goin' to go pretty soon, too, myself."

"No! Really?"

Again he warmed to her smile, and to her hair that was a clean, shining black; her face that was white with a gardenia's whiteness, and exquisitely molded; her eyes that had passion and gentleness and humor, all gleaming in their velvet-dark depths.

"Yeh. Yeh, I'm goin'."

He moved a little so that there might be a place for her beside him, and so she sat there, too, with her small feet swinging with his, her slim shoulders within reach of his arm. But somehow he knew that he wasn't to touch her.

"Are you with a steamship company, maybe?"

"No. Those guys! No shovelin' coal for me—at least like that."

She nodded. "I know."

"Yeh, but I'm goin' on a sort o' tramp steamer with a coupla friends of mine. Good guys."

He passed her the peanut bag and she dug into it with the eager, adventurous hand of a child.

"You're hungry!" he said quickly and tactlessly, measuring again the faint shadows that slanted against her cheeks.

Daintily, she bit a peanut in half, as if to deceive him. Then she laughed, almost joyously.

"Right you are! Really, Mister Voyager, it was the trail of the peanut shells that led me to you. I just *knew* that someone who liked peanuts——"

She choked suddenly, and although her eyes were still mirthful and unafraid, tears had made little wet black spikes of her lashes.

"You poor kid! Well, now, maybe a ham san'wich——"

SO out of this affair of peanut shells and tears, their odd friendship had its beginning. For it *was* only a friendship, just at first. In some ways they were such leagues apart.

They became "Dannie" and "Elinor" to each other, although each knew very little of the other's antecedents. It was sufficiently obvious, of course, that these antecedents had sprung from very different soil. *That* was obvious from the least casual reference, the idlest gesture.

The boy had literally been thrown from an over-burdened city home at the capable age of twelve. From that time he had made his own way, working by day and by night, from the back doors of slovenly restaurants to the trim golf-links of impressive country clubs; from garages to factories and back again.

Through all this he had had an unreasoning, unalterable craving for the sea, for the strange lands that lie beyond the sunset.

Slowly he got his stake together. That wasn't too hard. Against every pleasure that tempted him he weighed the flat silver coin that would have bought it; and the coin almost always tipped down the scale. The stake grew—and more and more his ears lifted at the sound of sailor-talk; his nostrils drew in at the smell of the sea.

But the girl's life had been different. Her childhood had been sheltered, crammed with the wholesome pleasures advocated in women's magazines.

When she was sixteen, her widower-father had died, leaving her fairly well-educated, utterly charming, and quite penniless; but she was naturally a vagabond, a throw-back to Romany.

She fled from Chicago to the fog-swept wharves of San Francisco, and there she supported herself as an artist's model, as a milliner's assistant, and, latterly, as a newspaper reporter.

So it came about, with the arrival of a new city editor to the staff of *The Globe*, that Elinor had found herself—crunching adventurously on a peanut shell. Oddly assorted vagabonds, Dannie and Elinor, but vagabonds of a bondage.

They were married, quondam gentlewoman and quondam gutterpup, on a June day that was a dazzling blue and golden snare for the unwary feet of people who happened to be emotional; and immediately thereafter they set sail in a gallant and none too seaworthy tramp-steamer for the bright islands far out and beyond the Gate.

NO two people had ever been happier than were Dannie and Elinor then. Elinor peeled off her stockings and walked barefoot on the deck, adopting a nautical reel that was vastly becoming, her face lifted to the sting of the salty spray.

Sometimes, too, she went into the cabin of the Chinese cook, and learned how to make amazing dishes of rice and shredded ham and bamboo root.

Dannie worked about, humming to himself, savoring the taste of ambition fulfilled, which has a very keen flavor indeed. And at night they embraced under the brilliant jagged lanterns that were the stars—like two people in a story book.

Thus the days sped by, under a cloudless sky, with the sunlight glinting in a straight gold trail ahead of them. They moored at strange ports —Honolulu, Samoa, Tahiti. They learned to lighten their talk with curious singing words, while Dannie's friends, the "good guys," wrangled and laughed and labored over the

trading, with amiable jibes for the idlers.

But in the course of the weeks the boy became matter-of-fact in his loving, even matter-of-fact in this realization of his great ambition, his yearning for the paths that lead along blue waters to strange and pagan lands.

But the girl! She picked up gay songs in barbaric French and Spanish and sang them with lips that were scarlet as an island flower.

Recklessly she lived and recklessly she loved, and men spoke with envy of that lucky devil who sometimes dared to quarrel with her; quarreled with her because her brilliance was vaguely irritating; because she flung words about that were not of his understanding; but, more particularly, because she spent his money on games of chance.

In a Tahitian cafe——

"Come *on*, you l'il seven! Seven come *'leven!* Sorry, Dan, Lady Luck isn't speaking to us at all tonight."

"You're crazy!" he shouted at her sullenly after they were alone. (He had learned that she wouldn't brook argument in the presence of others—an odd formalism that had held over from gentler days.)

"Now, Dannie——"

"Lissen!" he shouted. "How do you expect we're goin' to lay by anything with you throwin' nickels to gamblers and dollars to any foolish old beggar?"

"Why not, Dan? We're *free*, darling! Can't you understand that nice little word—synonym for heaven, paradise and all the earth thrown in! And we're so young and strong and don't we love each other more than two people ever—— Oh, Dan, Dan, just *tell* me——"

Grumbling, reluctantly smiling, he told her, because he couldn't resist just then her laughing mouth, her brave, sweet eyes, her shining crop of wild black hair. And so she brought his head close to her breast——

BUT, in the same way that some people "go native," the boy was—"going orthodox." His life-ambition, after all, had been a mirage. Or rather, it just had been a bright altar before which he could heap his hoard of silver coins.

The girl realized, one terrible day, that it was the hoard that he worshiped; the hoarding that he loved! And even the roughest vagabondage was more costly than a steady job back in 'Frisco, with the savings from his wages piling up behind the bars of a Market Street bank.

In a small way he began trading in the South Seas, having negotiated the sale of the tramp-steamer from his friends.

He wanted the girl to wash their clothes—"Nothing else to do!" he shot out furiously—and to take sole charge, of course, of their tiny hut in Samoa.

The meager profit he wrenched from his trading gratified him for a time; but frequently he grumbled for the serenity of a "white man's job."

He began to hate the sight of the blue lagoons, of the lacy, jade-green palms, especially of the scarlet flower that Elinor always thrust in her tousled dark hair.

"Dan, Dan! Do you remember that day we sat on the pier together, and how I envied you your going away?"

"Yeh."

She pressed kisses against a sulky mouth.

"Dearest, you've never regretted that we met that day? I—I'm really crazy about you, Dannie. You've never been sorry, have you, Dan?"

"Oh, for the love o' the Lord!"

"Please, Dan. Because *I* haven't been sorry." She hesitated rather anxiously. "You know that man

Pomeroy, who was visiting here last week? He's a big broker back home, it seems. He wanted me to go back to San Francisco with him, Dan. I knew you'd half kill him if you found out. I—I just laughed, Dan."

The boy moistened the edge of a cigarette paper. "Yeh?"

"Oh, he was awfully decent about it. Really *decent*. And he gave me a present as a sort of good-by. 'Just the opposite of a wedding ring,' he said."

The girl unwrapped an ancient, rust-stained dagger and curved her fingers lovingly around the jeweled hilt. She had a love of the dramatic, this Elinor, and one could have imagined an ancestress of hers watching a warm stream of blood flow back from just such a blade, watching with passionate, fascinated eyes.

She swept the weapon over her head with a flourish.

"I'll tell you, Dan! When you no longer love me, I'll *kill* you with this dagger! I could, you know! It's sort of in me. Dear, I think I could hate you just as much as I love you now."

But the boy did not answer. His eyes were speculatively, hungrily considering the garnets and sapphires and big yellow diamonds that glittered on the hilt of the dagger.

NOW, Kennedy, the newspaper man, saw the dagger; saw it when Morlock's blood was fresh upon it, brighter and more beautiful of color —that drab man's blood!—than the garnets that were patterned in its hilt.

Kennedy, walking home from his night police beat, had forced his way into Old Morlock's shop—first, because of an instinct that had made him invaluable to the fourth estate—second, because he had heard a soft cry behind that closed and shaded door, a cry like the *Aue!* of the distant South Seas.

But he blinked quite stupidly, there in the pallid light, when his eyes had found the dark heap sprawled behind the counter, and the white-faced woman, running a jeweled little hand through wild dark hair.

She told him the whole story then, both of them whispering like unreal creatures in a crazy dream.

"He'd really killed himself, you see," she explained—oh, with such infinite sadness! He'd killed the boy I met on the pier that day. People can, you know! They strangle the fineness within themselves, somehow."

"He left you—in Samoa," the newspaper man persisted.

"Yes. I came home from my swim in the lagoon and found that he had gone; they told me he'd sailed for America. The—the dagger was gone, too."

She brushed a tumbled lock of hair from haunting, lovely eyes.

"I—I had to stay in Samoa myself. No money, you know. But Gilbert Pomeroy made a second trip fifteen years later. He'd found the dagger in a San Francisco second-hand shop —*this* shop, dear Lord! And he brought it back to me. He's romantic, you know."

"You're so beautiful!" Kennedy burst out. "Samoa was kind to you."

The woman didn't answer; instead she knelt down and gently touched the dead man's hair.

"Yes. Dannie used to brush it that way. So that it wouldn't curl——"

Kennedy, who had lost touch with ordinary matters, here in this strange and pallid world, started suddenly.

"We'll go now. We'll leave the police to find the—suicide. You see, you were quite right, Mrs. Pomeroy. Dan Morlock *did* kill himself——"

"Yes," she whispered, "we'll go now."

The Most Mysterious Happening in My Life

AS RELATED BY

DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

AND

MARY PICKFORD

to

BIDE DUDLEY

DOUGLAS Fairbanks and his charming wife, Mary Pickford, had come to New York from California to see the latest Fairbanks' film, "The Black Pirate," open at the Selwyn Theatre.

They were in the living-room of their ten-room suite at the Ritz Carlton Hotel when I found them. We have been friends for years, so there was no formality in my visit. I got down to business right away.

"Doug," I said, "I want you to tell me about the greatest mystery you and Mary ever encountered."

"The one about the little gray lady, Douglas!" said Mary quickly. "That was the most thrilling. I'll never forget it. My heart stood still for what seemed an age."

"That's the first one to come into my mind, too," said Doug. "Want to hear about it, Bide?"

"Indeed, I do," I replied.

"All right—here goes! But this mystery was solved. I, figuratively speaking, jumped right down its throat. I went after it on the spot and"—here he smiled and doubled one fist—"it's lucky I didn't have a gun.

"It occurred when Mary and I were last abroad. In London we met a very prominent titled gentleman who invited us to spend a few days at his country home—an old castle in the North of England. We accepted.

"We left London by train on a very gloomy day. The sky was heavy with clouds and a mist was in the air. It was a typical English day, as one who has run into the London fogs might class it.

"On the way to the small town near which stood the castle, our host tried to cheer up the party in a peculiar way. He talked of supernatural things.

" 'Don't suppose you're afraid of ghosts,' he said. Mary paled, but I squeezed her hand and she kept silent.

" 'Not at all!' I replied. 'In fact, I'd like to meet a real ghost.'

"Our host smiled. 'Perhaps you will,' he said. 'We have one at the

castle. The place is hundreds of years old and has had its quota of murders, suicides and the like. However, when it came to me I inherited only one ghost. Seems as though I was cheated, but that's all I got. Still, this one ghost is pretty active, so I really have no cause for complaint.'

"'Er, what sort of a ghost is it?' asked Mary.

"'A perfectly sweet and gentle one,' he replied. 'It is that of a little gray lady. I understand she was murdered by her husband because of jealousy. He was a relative of mine, away back. I could give you the names, but they wouldn't mean anything. Then to me: 'So you want to meet a ghost, eh?'

"I had to go through with it. 'Sure!' I replied with a laugh.

"'That's good. I'm going to assign you to the bed chamber where this funny old erratic relative of mine killed her. Everything in the room is as it was when the murder occurred except the beds. They are new and of the twin variety. Our guests couldn't sleep in the old murder bed, so we decided to put in the new ones. Funny how ghosts will use unique methods to bother people, isn't it?'

"'I should say so,' I said in anything but a cheerful tone.

WE arrived at the little town and were driven out to the old castle in 'a coach and four.' There were footmen and so forth. All the castle's *atmosphere* of three hundred years ago had been retained. However, modern touches were to be seen here and there.

"The first thing that came to my view with especial interest was a tennis court. I wanted to get hold of a racquet at once and 'bite into' a game. My energy needed working off and, at the same time, I wanted to get my mind off ghosts.

"It was Saturday. We played tennis a lot that afternoon, after Mary and I had been shown to the 'murder chamber.' At dinner the subject of ghosts was brought up again by our host and his English friends.

"'Remember,' he said, 'if the little gray lady invades your bedroom while you're here, she wont harm you. She is small and rather frail, never speaks and seldom remains more than five minutes. I don't know what she goes there for. Perhaps she is looking for her life.

"'I've heard that a ghost will frequently go back to the scene of the death which made it, hoping to regain life. Funny idea, even for a ghost, isn't it?'

"'Absolutely jolly!' I replied, smiling. Inwardly, I was making up my mind to give any ghost—even though it be a lady—a good spanking, if it invaded my room.

"I thought I scented a trick. This theory proved false, however. Nevertheless, our host was having a lot of quiet fun trying to frighten us. He was succeeding with Mary, but I was bearing up well.

"After dinner we all played Bridge. Mary and I tired about ten o'clock and asked to be excused. We were shown to our room, the 'murder chamber.'

"'Listen, dear,' I said, 'don't be afraid. 'The old gentleman is having some fun with us. It's his idea of humor.'

"'I wont be afraid if you don't leave the room while I'm in it,' she replied. I promised and we went to bed.

"Nothing happened that night. We tossed a while, but finally fell asleep. As is our custom, we were up and around before eight o'clock.

"'See?' I said to Mary. 'The

little gray lady didn't bother us. Stop worrying—they're kidding us.'

"Mary agreed I was right and we forgot ghosts. We spent Sunday riding horseback, playing golf and tennis and reading. That night we went to bed early again.

"Right here I must speak of a closet that opened off our room. It had a door into the 'murder chamber' and one into the hall outside. Before we went to bed I entered the closet and saw that the hall door was locked. There was a grate in the room and near it a heavy iron poker. So much for details! We went to bed.

"Some time in the night, I was awakened by the turning of the knob on the main door to our room. I remembered I hadn't locked the door—just why, I don't know.

"Mary seemed to be asleep and I decided not to awaken her. I just lay still and watched that door. Slowly it opened and, in the dim moonlight that came through the old-fashioned windows I saw her—the little gray lady. I was petrified not with fear, but rather with weird fascination. I didn't move a muscle.

"Our visitor was attired in some sort of a filmy negligee of gray material. An old-fashioned lace-trimmed night-cap, or whatever they were called, was on her head. Its fringes hung down, partially hiding her face.

"She walked absolutely without sound. Around the end of my bed she went and into the closet, closing the door gently behind her. Then I heard the turn of the lock on the door opening into the hall.

"From a position flat on my back I gave one leap and went right over Mary's bed. Without really knowing what I was doing I picked up the iron poker. Then I hesitated. Mary was awake.

"'Did you see it?' I said hoarsely.

"'Yes—yes—I—I saw it,' she replied.

"GRIPPING the poker I jerked open the closet door. There was no little gray lady inside. A jump took me to the closet's other door and I opened it. Shutting it again I threw the bolt and went back to Mary. She was calling me.

"'Wha—what was it?' she asked.

"'You've got me,' I replied. 'But we both saw it, didn't we?'

"Mary nodded. 'Let's get out,' she suggested.

"I shook off my nervousness.

"'No!' I replied. 'I'm going to stay right here. I've never believed there were such things as ghosts and I don't now.'

"'But you saw her.'

"'Yes,' I admitted, 'but I'm not going to make a fool of myself. I'm going to solve this mystery.'

"'How? You mustn't leave this room without taking me along. I wont stay here alone.'

"I sat on the edge of her bed. 'Let's think,' I said.

"As we pondered over the situation, there was a rap at the room's main door. Mary looked at me nervously. I gripped the poker so tightly it seemed to cut into my hand.

"'What is it?' she whispered. I didn't answer her question. Instead I said firmly: 'Come in!'

"The door swung open slowly and there stood our little gray lady.

"'I needed a wrap that was in your closet,' she said. 'The other door was locked and I decided you young people wouldn't mind if I invaded your sleeping quarters for a moment.'

"She was our hostess—a dear, little, elderly woman who invariably had smiled at us reassuringly when her husband insisted on talking of ghosts.

"'I'm sorry I awakened you. I beg your pardon.'

"'It's all right, Lady So-and-So,' I said, as I slipped the poker under the bed-clothes. 'Did you get the wrap?'

"'Why, yes,' she replied. 'This is it.'

"It was hanging on her arm. I felt a bit foolish.

"'Good-night!' She turned to leave. 'Sleep well!'

"'Good-night!' I said softly. And she slipped quietly out.

"Next morning, after breakfast, our host smiled and said: 'I hear you saw a little gray lady last night.'

"'Yes,' I answered. 'Thank God for one thing!'

"'What is that?'

"'The fact that I didn't have a gun.' I slapped him on the back. 'We Americans are often very impulsive. I might have killed somebody and you, dear Lord So-and-So, would have been an accomplice.'

"He laughed heartily. 'Let's trot out and clash at tennis,' he said.

"And that," concluded Doug, "was our greatest mystery. Look at Mary—she's trembling even now—over the recollection."

And Mary was.

The Ninth Story of this Series
will be told by

Channing Pollock

It will appear in our next issue—
out June 1

Captain Barnaby's Log

1687, Tuesday, May 12th, this day, the wind S. S. W. and a little before four in the afternoon we anchored in Manser Road, where lay Captains Brian, Bristo and Barnaby, all of them bound to Lucera to load.

Wednesday, May 13th, we weighed anchor and about two o'clock sailed for the island of Lucera, wind W. S. W. and bitter weather.

Thursday, 14th, we saw the island and came to anchor in twelve fathoms of water, the wind W. S. W.

On the 15th day of May, we had an observation of Mr. Booty in the following manner: We all went ashore to shoot, off Stromboli. When we had done we called our men together, about fourteen minutes after three in the afternoon, when, to our great surprise, we saw two men run by us with amazing swiftness.

Captain Barnaby said, "Lord bless me, the foremost man looks like my next-door neighbor, old Booty," but he added he did not know the one that ran behind him.

Booty was dressed in gray clothes, and the one behind him in black. We saw them run into the burning mountain in the midst of the flames, on which we heard a terrible noise, too horrible to be described.

Captain Barnaby then desired us to look at our watches, note the time in our notebooks, and enter it in our journals, which we accordingly did.

WHEN we were laden, we all sailed for England, and arrived at Gravesend on October 6th, 1687. Mrs. Barnaby and Mrs. Brian came to greet us, and after some discourse, the first said to Captain Barnaby:

"My dear, I have some news for you. Old Booty is dead."

Captain Barnaby swore an oath, and said:

"We all saw him run into Hell."

Some time later, Mrs. Barnaby met a lady of her acquaintance in London, and told her what her husband had seen concerning Mr. Booty. This coming to Mrs. Booty's ears, she brought an action against Captain Barnaby, assessing him five thousand dollars damages.

He gave bail and the case came to trial at the Court of King's Bench, where Mr. Booty's clothes were brought into court.

The sexton of the parish and the people that were with him when he died swore to the time when he died; and we swore to our journals, and they agreed within two minutes. Twelve of our men swore that the buttons of his coat were covered with the same gray cloth as the coat, and it appeared to be so.

The jury then asked me if I knew Mr. Booty in his lifetime. I said I never saw him till he ran by me into the burning mountain.

The judge then said:

"Lord grant that I may never see the sight you have seen. One, two or three may be mistaken, but twenty or thirty cannot."

So the widow lost the case.

THE same is now in the records at Westminster, bearing the signatures of those who tried the case, viz: Herbert, Chief Justice; Wythens, Holloway and Wright, Justices, all of his Majesty James II.

Wrathful Valley

By BEN LUCIEN BURMAN

THE *Tin Pan Swallow* wheezed up the yellow river, while the kettles and nickeled oilstoves lying on its tiny deck rattled a lazy accompaniment and mistily reflected the sun glowering through the dull haze of the West Virginia mountains.

Orn Letcher, standing toweringly alone at the wheel of the vessel, swung it to dodge a bar; and he stared at the endless ribbon of logs which choked the stream half a mile ahead, in the distance appearing like burnt matchsticks thrown into the water by some frantic, gigantic smoker.

"Damn them thievin' Ettys," he rumbled malignantly, passion moving him to speech, though there was no one to hear. "All of them logs is mine. Mine by rights. Ought to be livin' like a king instead of runnin' up an' down a river peddlin' dishpans to old wimmen. Like a king."

With the hook which was fitted into the stump of his right arm he flicked a bee from his drooping mustache, and with a padded stick began beating a tattoo upon an iron washtub set bass-drum fashion in a wooden rest.

"Poundin' my life away lettin' people know I'm comin' an' then wont buy nuthin'," he grumbled, his eyes still intent on the ribbon of logs. "All that there timber ought to be mine. Damn them thievin' Ettys."

Resting his handless arm a moment, he was about to repeat his salute on the tub when the eerie wail of coursing bloodhounds rose above the pines mounting guard on the shore. Almost at the same instant a sturdy, youthful figure burst from the thicket a hundred feet from the Swallow.

The newcomer's frankly boyish face was splashed with mud; his head was hatless; his green coat, radiant with two great rows of pearl buttons, was streaked with blood; his trousers bore wide, jagged holes as though rent by some clawing beast.

At sight of this singular individual, Letcher's lips curved uglily. Quickly he lifted the rifle hanging near the wheel to his shoulder and brought the hook of his right arm to the trigger.

The youth glanced at the menacing muzzle, hesitated, then abruptly dived into the river. Swimming with desperate, exhausted strokes, he drove on to the vessel and, gasping, caught the gunnel.

The peddler pointed the rifle over the rail.

"What's a Etty doin' on my boat?" he growled.

The youth breathed great drafts of the humid air.

"The hounds . . . after me."

"Killed somebody?"

"The hounds is after me . . . but I didn't."

"Who's shot?"

"My cousin, Jedge Etty. Ain't shot. Found him dead with a knife cut in his throat."

The weird baying of the dogs floated louder above the trees. The

youth's immature but vigorous mouth softened with entreaty.

"Lemme hide on yer boat, Orn. I know your kin an' my kin sweared to kill each other on sight. But yuh never done nuthin' to me an' I never done nuthin' to you. Quick! Before the hounds come."

Impassively Letcher rubbed with his forefinger the blur as of grafted skin lividly marring his cheek.

"Yuh got blood on yuh," he muttered. "Where'd yuh git that if yuh didn't kill nobody?"

THE face of the youth beneath him quivered wrathfully.

"I ought to have knowed better than come here when I heard yuh poundin' yer tub. I thought yuh'd be human like to a man all cut up by dogs. I'll drown an' be damned to yuh."

He released one of his hands from the gunnel and prepared to strike out into the rippled water.

"I'll hide yuh." The peddler's voice was colorless, dispassionate. "Even if yuh are a Etty."

He stood gazing at the deck in dark meditation.

"Only one place they wont smell yuh out. The drain pipe frum the sink in the kitchen. Jest touches the water. Git plenty of air there. Dive under an' feel around till yuh find it."

The youth disappeared in a streak of radiant green beneath the swells, just as three immense dogs burst through the underbrush bordering the shore.

A moment later, a straggling line of lean, blue-overalled farmers raced down the bank, their black hair and glimmering rifles, which almost reached the ground, causing them to appear like fantastic blue-bottle flies dragging broken wings.

"Seen anything of Dudey Etty?" shouted the leader of the posse, curving his bony hands into a megaphone.

Letcher shook his head in a quick negative and slowly steered his vessel to within a few feet of the questioner.

"What's the matter?" he barked. "What's Dudey Etty been a-doin' ?"

"Killed his cousin the Jedge," drawled the sheriff. "That's what he done. Him an' Dudey quarreled about the title to them logs up there in the river that yuh an' the Ettys was always disputin' about, an' the Jedge told Dudey to quit goin' with Mazie Ellen that he's guardeen of. So Dudey jest plain murdered him.

"People passin' the Jedge's house on the hill last night heard him an' Dudey arguin' terrible; an' when Lace Harkey stopped by on the way home frum political meetin' to see if he couldn't kind of smooth things out, there was the Jedge a-layin' on the floor stone dead.

"Them logs has killed a lot of people. Too many people, Orn," he added meaningly, touching his rifle. "That includes yuh, too. I've warned everybody. There's been too much feud fightin' around here. Wont be nobody left in the country exceptin' the undertaker if it keeps up.

"The governor up at the State House is mighty mad, an' it's goin' to stop. It's the gallows now. That's why we're lookin' fur Dudey. Lucky he left his handkerchief behind him so we didn't have no trouble gittin' the trail. We been trackin' him all night."

The peddler spun the wheel sharply to keep the Swallow abreast the shore.

"Sorry I ain't seen him," he grunted.

One of the hounds smelling at the water's edge crouched monstrously,

and with a sudden leap hurtled to the tin-strewn deck.

Vaulting over mounds of burnished frying-pans and glittering cake moulds, the beast sniffed its way to the kitchen where, bolting through the open door, it clambered upon the sink and began a petulant whimper, its long nose crushed into bluntness against the brassy mouth of the drain.

"By the Almighty!" the sheriff exclaimed when he had tramped aboard. "That dog sure acts like he's found somethin'. That's a smart dog, Orn."

"Yuh better say look what he done to my kitchen," grumbled Letcher hastily, pointing to a pot of beans which the animal in its headlong dash had tumbled to the bright-scrubbed floor.

"He smells a chicken I got down in the water coolin'. That's how smart he is. Git him out of here before he busts up the whole boat."

"Well, even a dog kin make mistakes," the sheriff returned genially. "I guess yuh ain't the one to be hidin' a Etty. Particular since he'll be the last of the Ettys when he hangs. He cain't git very far, that's sure. One of the hounds come back with his jaws an' claws all bloody, so he must have got cut up pretty bad . . . Come on, you fool," he grunted to the bristling animal.

His face a gloomy riddle, the peddler watched the posse hazily vanish behind the brow of a melancholy hill. His herculean body bent over the rail.

"Yuh kin come up now," he called stonily.

The youth floated up in emerald brightness through the water. He pulled himself aboard, his face, now washed clean of blood, radiating fervent, immature gratitude.

"There's people says yuh was a sneak an' trickier than them rattlers over in the hollow, Orn," he declared artlessly, thrusting out his hand. "But yuh're a man. It's me the last of the Ettys is tellin' yuh. Shake."

WITH the hook serving him as wrist and fingers the peddler tamped tobacco into the bowl of a golden-edged pipe.

"It's me the last of the Letchers is tellin' yuh," he growled. "I saved yer life. But I wont shake hands with no Etty."

The youth's hand darted to the pistol at his hip, then flapped against his vivid trousers. He smiled wanly.

"I thought we could let bygones be bygones," he murmured. "But if yuh don't want to, I kin git along without yer friendship. Jest kind of foolish, that's all."

He limped strengthlessly to the rail.

"Where yuh goin'?"

"To shore. I ain't goin' to take favors frum a man who wont shake my hand."

"Yuh cain't go no place. Everybody knows yuh an' yer fancy clothes within a hundred miles of here. They'd ketch yuh quicker than lightnin'. Yuh stay on the boat or you'll git hung."

"I'll git hung, then. I ain't goin' to take no favors . . . from a . . . man . . . from . . . a . . . "

His spent body collapsed numbly to the deck.

Five hours later he awoke from a fevered sleep to find himself lying upon a cot in the candle-lit obscurity of the *Swallow's* spare cabin.

Gradually, as his brain began to clear, he distinguished over the top of the jug of whisky near his head the nightgowned form of Orn Letcher kneeling gigantically in the pulsating shadows. His head was uplifted toward the starry sky silvering the river; from his scarcely

moving lips came in a supplicating monotone the blurred, fragmentary phrases:

"O Lord . . . Jest three things I ask yuh . . . Three things . . . Three . . ."

The youth shifted uneasily on the sheets.

"What yuh sayin' there, Orn?" he murmured.

At the sound of Dudey's voice the peddler started in sheepish astonishment. Heavily he rose to his feet.

"I was prayin'," he mumbled awkwardly. "Prayin' fur yuh to git well an' strong. I didn't know yuh had come to yet. I'll git yuh somethin' to eat."

Dudey's head slumped back to the pillow.

"Think of a Letcher prayin' fur me," he chuckled drowsily. "Yuh ain't up to nuthin', are yuh? You're a funny feller, Orn . . . Funny."

When the other returned with a tray bearing canned peaches and sputtering bacon, he was asleep.

For two days, while the vessel lay moored a mile below the log boom at the microscopic village of Nigger Knoll, Dudey lay an uncomplaining invalid in the sunny chamber. On the morning of the third day he wriggled into his tattered garments. Then with the same ardor as a child of seven had impelled him to wear a starched collar to prayer meeting, an act which had straightway bestowed his nickname upon him, he brushed the mud from his clothes, and shaved rashly, needlessly, with a razor borrowed from the cargo.

His toilet completed, he limped to the wheel, where Letcher sat staring upon the cloud-mirrored swells of the river.

"When yuh goin' down to Huntington?" he queried.

"Why yuh want to git to Huntington?"

"I kin git a train there to Cincinnati an' hide till they finds out I ain't the one that killed my cousin. When you goin', Orn?"

The peddler began sullenly cleaning his pipe with a broomstraw.

"When yuh give me back them logs up there yer pappy stole from me?"

Sharp patches of fiery crimson glowed in Dudey's cheeks.

"My pappy didn't steal them timber lands," he muttered. "An' anyway, yuh know as well as I do my cousin Jedge Etty cheated him into signin' away his rights to 'em jest last month before he died. That's why him an' me argued. The papers yuh signed an' the papers pappy signed are in his safe now."

"Yuh kin open that safe, cain't yuh? Yuh couldn't have worked in his office a year without learnin' the combination. An' when I git both them papers an' tear 'em up, them logs is mine again."

"Is that why yuh hid me on your boat?"

"Mebbe."

"I'll git off, then." He moved in angry limps to the shore board. "I ain't goin' to be a thief fur nobody, even if what I stole belonged to me."

With his browned finger nail Letcher pried at the straw snagged in the pipe stem.

"Wouldn't be in such a hurry," he drawled sardonically. "Look here what's decoratin' every pike in the county."

From his pocket he withdrew a crinkled handbill.

"There's your picture. An' see that 'Thousand Dollars,' under it, 'Dead or Alive'? It's a thousand dollars 'cause he was a Jedge," he added blandly.

"If it had been yuh or me they wouldn't have offered nuthin'. Jedges comes high. With all that money an' that 'Dead' in there, yuh wouldn't be alive half an hour after yuh put

yer foot on the bank. . . . Yuh better git me them little documents. Yuh ain't runnin' no risks.

"The house is up on the hill all by itself with nobody in it since he died. Them logs in the boom an' the timber still standin' is worth ten thousand, I guess. That'll be yer ticket money to Huntington. It's a hundred miles, that's a hundred dollars a mile, Ain't too much for carryin' a Etty. Ain't enough, hardly."

The youth shrugged his ragged shoulders.

"Ain't nuthin' to do but pay yer fare, I guess," he murmured, and trudged drearily back into the cabin.

WHEN night had fallen, and the mounting moon was flooding the peaks with rivers of iridescent ivory, the *Swallow* slipped her mooring cable and drifted noiselessly down the brightening waters. She again came to rest in a fern cove where a chimney and a low gable showed mistily silhouetted atop the crest of a knoll.

Silently the youth's foot sunk into the moss carpeting the bank; grimly he limped forward and was swallowed up in the leafy murkiness.

The peddler dropped to his knees.

"Thank yuh, Lord," he droned devoutly. "Only two more things before the wrong's all righted. . . . Only two more, I ask yuh. . . . Don't let nuthin' happen. . . . Yuh took my hand frum me. . . . Yuh owe me somethin' fur that, Lord. . . ."

He arose and for an hour moodily trod up and down the reverberant deck. At last his ears caught the sound of crackling underbush. He bent forward.

"Got 'em?" he called huskily.

"Yep."

Before the youth could mount the footboard, the peddler had snatched a musty envelope from his limp fingers. Glancing at the inscription, "Oak Ridge Timber" ornately inked upon the surface, he tremblingly examined the contents, and avidly thrust the envelope into his shirt.

"There ain't nuthin' to prove them logs ain't mine now," he exulted. "Nobody kin touch 'em but me. Nobody."

With a twig, Dudey scraped off the gluey clay encrusting his patent leather shoes.

"I've stole fur yuh now," he pronounced lifelessly. "When yuh goin' to git me to Huntington?"

"The boat's leavin' here in the mornin'."

"Is she goin' to Huntington?"

"I said the boat was leavin' in the mornin'. Are yuh deaf?" His voice was bitter, mocking.

Dudey's hunting knife flashed from its sheath.

"If yuh don't take me to Huntington after what yuh made me do tonight I'll . . . I'll . . ."

Solemnly the peddler pinched the muscles of the youth's twitching arm.

"Yuh ain't strong enough to kill me, Dudey. . . . I thought I'd tell yuh we're takin' a passenger to Ten Mile when we leave in the mornin'. Somebody yuh know."

"What difference does it make to me who yuh're takin'?"

"Thought it might make some, bein' as it's the gal yuh've been courtin' four years. She's goin' down to pick out a monument fur Jedge Etty, bein' as he was her guardeen. There wasn't no other way she could come so I said she could take the boat."

Lifting down a battered zither hanging from the wall, he spread the instrument lazily across his knees and with his metallic hand began plucking the strings.

"Thought yuh'd like to see her, mebbe."

Dudey's cheeks tinted with the fire of repressed eagerness.

"Course I want to see her. She wont believe I done the murder."

"All right. I'll tell her yuh're hidin' here when she comes."

The whine of the jangling zither floated over the water, echoing and reechoing through the hills, melting at last into a limpid treble for the hoarse, booming bass of the frogs croaking on the willowed shore.

AT six o'clock, when the sun was endeavoring to brighten a sulky morning, a girl stepped gingerly aboard the tin-cluttered *Swallow*. A dress of austere black poplin hung stiffly from her delicate shoulders; her slender arms were ringed with two misshapen bracelets; an outlandish-feathered hat, also black, hid the brilliance of her golden hair.

Beautiful despite her accoutrements, she stood at the rail glancing down at the foaming eddies while the tiny vessel swung into the current. A mile had sped whitely behind the bounding stern, when the peddler peered up from the wheel.

"Maize Ellen," he said abruptly, "me an' yer guardeen was against each other, but that don't make no difference to me an' yuh. Yuh're a stranger anyways. Yuh ain't Etty kin.

"People was surprised yesterday when I spoke up an' said yuh could come on the *Swallow* when I heard yuh askin' down at Harkey's store how yuh could git to Ten Mile. I wanted yuh to come special. Dudey's on the boat."

With a feathery movement of her body the girl faced him, her lips trembling with hope and incredulity.

"Yuh mean. . . . Yuh mean. . . . Dudey. . . . Etty?"

"Yep."

Her fingers clutched the peddler's sleeve.

"Where'd he come from? How'd he git here? How long's he been?"

The questions burst in a quick melodious volley.

The peddler smiled dourly.

"Come a couple of days ago," he grunted. "The sheriff was after him. He asked me to hide him."

"An' yuh done it? Fur a Etty?"

"Wasn't goin' to let a man hang frum a noose even if he was a enemy."

Her silken-lashed eyes surveyed him quizzically.

"Why yuh gittin' so good all of a sudden, Mister Letcher?"

"I ain't a bad man." Disquieted, he averted her gaze. "People's misjudged me."

"I wont forgit what yuh done fur Dudey. 'Cause I know he never killed poor Jedge Jeff."

She caught his arm again in a gentle entreaty.

"Yuh ain't foolin' me, are yuh? He's on the boat sure enough? I most cain't believe it till I see him."

"I'll git him to call up to yuh if yuh don't believe."

He glanced toward an oaken chair.

"That's his coat he left layin' there. That's proof enough, ain't it? Ain't another coat like that in the state of West Virginia. He's stayin' inside 'cause it ain't safe fur him to come out till we git a little further down the river."

She touched the garment vivaciously.

"That's Dudey's all right. I could not ever forgit them white pockets." Her voice rippled in a purling laugh. "When kin I see him?"

"When we git a little further down the river, like I told yuh."

His face was a gloomy mask.

"He said he wanted to give yuh somethin' before yuh seen him," he grunted, withdrawing a thin packet newly wrapped in a newspaper from his coat. "Acted kind of queer about

it. Me an' Dudey's been becomin' friends a little since he's been on the boat but he ain't told me what's in it. He said you'd understand."

She gazed at him brightly.

"Oh, I'll understand," she confided. "Wonder what he's givin' me."

She loosened the string binding the packet and began to remove the wrapper. Her animation faded.

"Funny," she said haltingly, as she exposed the musty envelope which bore the inscription "Oak Ridge Timber." "That's Judge Jeff's writin'. . . . Dudey couldn't have done that."

Nervously she drew out the wrinkled documents within, then slowly slipped them back into the envelope and returned it to the peddler. Her scarlet lips became the color of the bitter gray cliffs overhanging the water.

"He done it," she murmured. "He was the only one that knowed the combination."

Her dulled eyes descried a log broken from the boom upstream staggering in the swells.

"He liked yuh better than he did me," she whispered to the unheeding wood.

The precipices on both sides of the river gave way to a sudden weeded plain through which the stream indolently drifted, like a long yellow snail creeping over a shimmering green carpet. The peddler rose from the wheel.

"There ain't nobody lives in here," he announced gruffly. "It's safe fur Dudey to come out now. Do yuh want to see him? He'll be waitin' to know."

She shook her head in a dazed negative.

"Yuh're sure? Don't do nothin' of a sudden. People is always sorry for things they do of a sudden."

She slipped from her finger a gold ring set with three enormous imitation rubies and dropped it into his hand.

"All right. I'll take it to him."

He caught her fingers and pressed them round a spoke of the whining wheel.

"Hold jest that way till I come back."

He stalked to the stern and entered Dudey's cabin.

"She says she don't want to see no murderer," he grunted. "Here's yer ring."

The youth took the flame-studded circlet; shivered as though the rubies touching his palm were ice, by some uncanny chemistry frozen red.

"Weather must be gittin' cold," he said defiantly, though his mouth twitched dismally. "Rain before night maybe."

THE peddler trudged back to the helm. The girl mechanically released the spoke handle and stood at the stern, a black-feathered automaton, watching the pigmy catfish poke their noses above the splashing surf.

She remained thus, forlorn, immobile, until the bell-tower of the school at Ten Mile showed round the bend of the stream. Then she spoke, in a voice of patient wretchedness:

"Don't wait fur me. I changed my mind about goin' back on the boat."

"Yuh ain't goin' to tell the sheriff he's here?"

"I ain't the kind that tells."

When she had trudged onto the cobbled clearing serving as a levee, the peddler shouldered a bundle of saucepans and followed jingling over the stones.

Returning at dusk, he set the table in the spotless dining saloon. At his curt summons to supper, the youth entered. They ate in grim silence.

"Yer gal believed yuh was innocent when she come on the boat," Letcher asserted brutally, as he popped a potato into his vast mouth.

"An' she'd be believin' it yet if it hadn't been fur my givin' her them Oak Ridge papers an' makin' her think yuh killed her guardeen to steal 'em."

His arm darted out, caught the handle of the meat-knife the youth was savagely thrusting at his breast, and wrenched it free.

"Yuh ain't strong enough, Dudey," he cackled. "Take another week before yuh git over all the blood yuh lost fighting with them dogs."

His grip relaxed. The youth jerked away his wrist, and rubbing it painfully, glanced at his tormentor in powerless fury.

"Why are yuh doin' it fur? Why? Are yuh a hell-devil? Or what are yuh? If yuh hated me so because I was a Etty, why didn't yuh let the sheriffs git me? They'd a-hung me in a couple of days."

Gravely Letcher pressed the knife intended for his heart against a greasy ham.

"I'm rightin' wrongs. Yer pappy stole the Oak Ridge logs from me; I made yuh steal 'em back. Yer pappy cheated me out of my gal—I cheated yuh out of yers. . . . Rightin' wrongs, that's all. . . . An' there's still one more to be righted yet."

"What's that?"

"Yuh'll find out soon enough."

"I'll git off the boat."

"Yuh ain't got no place to go, exceptin' the gallows. I seen 'em hangin' Zeb Demler yesterday. He screamed worse than a crazy man when they put the rope round him. I don't think yuh want to go there.

"Besides," he added craftily, "I'll be gittin' to Huntington in a few days . . . mebbe. . . . Put down that there bread-knife. Yuh'll be cuttin' yerself an' losin' more blood . . ."

Four days after, while the Swallow was tossing blithely at her mooring below Nigger Knoll, Dudey sat on the shore, a fishing pole in his hand. Darkly he was regarding the depths of a crystalline pool, when a long fin suddenly cleft the surface of a brook flowing into the river a short distance away. Dudey saw it.

Briskly he lifted up the pole, hurried to the barbed wire, which fenced off the pasture through which the brook flowed and he began crawling through.

"Yuh better stay on this side of the fence," grunted Letcher, who stood booted in the stream hammering at a log snagged on the propeller. "Rox Perry's bull's been runnin' wild in that meadow the last couple of days. He'll tear yuh to pieces."

Dudey spat a disdainful mouthful of tobacco, and continued to wriggle between the wire. Through at last, he cast his baited hook to the spot where the fin had first disappeared. Triumphant he saw the pole bend, the line grow taut; but almost at the same instant his ear caught the sound of underbush snapping under the weight of some rushing body.

Reluctant to abandon his game at the moment of capture, he gave the pole a jerk that whipped the trout high out of the water, and bolted to the fence just as the head of the bull appeared monstrously over a matted clump of blackberry bushes.

Attempting to worm between the strands of wire, the youth's garments hooked upon the barbs; instantly perceiving escape to be impossible, he seized a broken fence post lying in the weeds. Tense, calculating, he waited until the horn of the charging beast fairly rent his already torn trousers; the wood crashed down upon the animal's nose in a blow which hurled it roaringly backward.

Again and again it plunged to the attack; always with a cool, dexterous parry, he drove it into a snorting retreat.

At length, bruised and trickling blood at the mouth, it gave a humil-

iated grunt, and slunk into the bushes from which it had come. The youth clutched the fishing pole and tranquilly made his way through the fence to the *Swallow*.

Letcher waded ashore.

"Now yuh kin fight me," he said quietly.

Dudey cut the hook from the glittering catch and made no answer.

"Now yuh kin fight me," the peddler repeated. "Yuh licked that bull first class. It's a sign yuh ain't sick no more. I'm goin' to fight yuh an' if I kin, kill yuh with my own hands —the way yer pappy done my pappy. I'd a-done it to yer pappy, but he died in bed. So I'll do it to yuh instead. It'll be a fair fight."

"Is that why yuh've been feedin' me up so good an' feelin' my muscles every day fur?"

"Yep."

MOODILY the youth began scraping the scales from the trout's speckled back.

"I'm smaller than yuh. . . . But yuh ain't got no right hand. . . . I'll fight bulls. But I ain't goin' to be so low as to fight a . . . a . . . cripple."

"Cripple?" The peddler's mouth twisted sardonically. "Watch me. . . ."

Twenty feet away a great green spider was creeping over the deck, two of its furry legs clutching a fly. Letcher fitted a knife blade into the metal socket of his wristless arm and whipped the stump vehemently forward; the steel sped out in an arc of dazzling silver.

A second later the fly was dragging itself away, two cleanly severed spider legs still clinging to its fat body; the spider was pressing stupidly against the steel which had so mysteriously robbed it of its prey.

Dudey's scowl concealed his astonishment.

"I'll fight yuh," he muttered. "When yuh want it to be?"

"Tonight. After supper."

Letcher turned to watch two half-sunken logs waddling in the river. "That freshlet's loosened a lot of the timber in the boom," he grumbled. "Some more'll be comin' down pretty soon an' bust up the propeller again when I ain't lookin'.

"Price Jackson, what's takin' care of 'em fur yer dead cousin, don't know more about loggin' than a drunk mine-mule. I'd go an' let them logs run out this minute, but it wont be safe for me to claim 'em fur a couple of months yet. Yuh better go in and git some supper. Yuh can't fight right on a empty stummick."

The sun tumbled from sight behind two pines standing atop a broken, angry ridge, dreary sentinels brooding over a wrathful, darkening world. The night breezes swept damply over the valley. By the light of a guttering candle in the dining saloon the man and the youth stripped to the waist.

"Remember. Nuthin' else but hands." The peddler tugged at his belt. "Yuh ready?"

Dudey nodded assent. Their muscles tightened; soundlessly their bare feet left the floor and their bodies hurtled through the air. They collided with the muffled impact as of an inexpert diver striking water; the peddler toppled backward, the youth's encircling arms crushing his breast.

With a titanic lunge upward, the peddler caught his adversary's neck between his fingers and the sinister hook at the end of his maimed arm. But the youth's arms lashed out, wrenching the fingers of flesh and metal away.

A mound of tinware heaped against the wall collapsed in a ringing avalanche upon them; a whistle sounded dolefully, warningly from the distant village up the river; the combatants gave no heed, but continued to lie locked in each other's embrace, their

sleek muscles writhing like eels cavorting in a shiny pool.

"We're even this way," the peddler grunted suddenly. "It'll have to be knives."

"Yep."

They arose pantingly. Grimly Letcher set into his arm the blade which a few hours before had freed the captive fly; stoically Dudey unsheathed his hunting knife. They crouched; leaped; locked again.

The plud! plud! of hoofs plashing over the oozing mud of the bank drifted through the window.

"Orn!" A nasal voice twanged excitedly. "Where are yuh?"

The peddler's only response was an ineffective lunge to break his adversary's hold.

"Fur God's sake, Orn," the voice shouted desperately. "Ain't you heard that whistle?"

The peddler lifted his head.

"Old fool Russ Estill," he muttered to his antagonist. "He'll be comin' in here an' spoilin' things if I don't go to the window an' see what he's wantin'. Yuh wont try to stick me in the back if I talk to him?"

"I ain't like you."

THE moon dingily lighted a horseman halted beneath an oak.

"What yuh wantin'?" Letcher rumbled.

"Git your boat down to Chain Creek Orn," the rider called shrilly, "if yuh don't want to git killed. The freshet's broke up the boom an' all Jedge Etty's logs is comin' out a rippin'. Yuh know them logs runs. Bust yuh up like a guinea's eggshell if yuh don't git out of the way.

"I was jest ridin' to tie up my shanty a little better when I seen the *Swallow* standin' here an' thought mebbe yuh hadn't heard the warnin' whistle. Yuh got just about five minutes." He spurred off through the sucking sloughs of the shore.

Letcher faced the waiting youth.

"Yuh heard what he said. We kin git away now an' git away alive. Or we kin fight it out an' mebbe one of us kin kill the other before the logs comes an' kills us both. Do yuh want to stay an' take yer chances or be a . . . quitter?"

"I ain't run yet, have I?"

Once more their sweating bodies interlaced; once more they crashed to the floor, this time against the dining table on whose uncleared cloth a coffee pot still sizzled pleasantly. The pot rocked, then tumbled from the table-boards; the coffee poured upon the youth's legs in a steaming black river.

A wave of fiery agony swept from his ankles to his hips as the liquid bathed his flesh; yet, while the first of the oncoming logs began battering the worn hull of the boat, he doggedly continued to hold off the bright-pointed stump struggling to reach his breast.

At last gasping, exhausted, he felt the peddler squirm from his grasp. Wonderingly he watched as the other crouched in the corner; impetuously he jerked one of the dishpans as a shield before his face just as the peddler's blade sped from its socket, a silver arrow shot from a human bow. It clashed harshly against the polished metal, then fell broken to the carpet.

Rousing himself, the youth dragged toward his enemy who had snatched the knife lying in the dish beside the ham. But he fell sprawling as the floor upreared and two of the stanchions supporting the ceiling snapped thunderously.

He regained his feet to see his foe limply outstretched against the baseboard. A tiny thread of blood wound down his cheeks from his quivering nostrils; his breast lay under a huge log which had shattered through the wall.

An instant Dudey stared vacantly, hesitant; then casting off his lethargy as a snake sheds his wintry skin, he darted across the narrow chamber and lifted the body from its timber compress.

"Git away. Git away," the peddler mumbled drowsily. "I'm done fur. Git off the boat alive if yuh kin. Yuh won the fight. My logs won 'em fur yuh."

"If I had killed yuh myself it'd been different. I don't need no logs to do my fightin'."

Slinging the crumpled form over his shoulder, he staggered onto the deck. The moon shone wanly over a writhing river; he and his silent burden were two castaways on an island drowning in a sea of swirling, maddened wood. He set his foot upon a log and began to leap and stumble across the booming maelstrom.

Twice he slipped under the galling weight around his neck and seemed about to tumble into the delirious water; twice the vigorous mountain existence which makes a master timberman of every child stiffened his muscles into balance and sent him totteringly onward.

At length he reached the shore.

"Wait here," he panted, as he laid the peddler on the mossy slope. "I'm goin' up to Neil Clay's house on top the hill an' git help fur yuh."

Feebly Letcher gripped his arm.

"Yuh don't know what yuh're doin'," he murmured. "Neil's a deputy sheriff. Yuh'll git arrested the minute he lays eyes on yuh. What's the use? I told yuh I'm done fur."

"Ain't goin' to see a man die like a dog. Let 'em hang me. I ain't got nuthin' to live fur."

He limped dismally up the bank.

When he returned, his hands were shackled to the rusty-bearded farmer who strode magisterially at his side.

Letcher withdrew his gold-rimmed pipe from a pocket and dreamily struck a match upon a stone.

"Take them handcuffs off him, Neil," he mumbled.

The rustic gaped.

"Why. . . . why fur?" he stammered.

"'Cause yuh an' the other sheriffs an' yer hounds is all fools, that's why. I killed Jedge Etty."

The deputy gave an incredulous start, then moved solemnly forward.

"Nope. Ain't no use arrestin' me, Neil. I'll be dead by the time this pipe's smoked up. Anyways I killed him fair an' square. . . . A fair fight. . . . I was jest rightin' wrongs. . . . Keep away, Neil. I tell yuh I'll be dead by the time this pipe's smoked up. . . . Yuh'll get the reward jest the same if I'm dead."

He took a prolonged, sleepy puff of tobacco.

"You oughtn't have brought me off the boat," he whispered reproachfully to the youth. "I would have died happy knowin' a Etty was goin' to hang fur somethin' I done, but after yuh risked yer life that way I had to tell the truth. Yuh fought a fair fight. . . . I'd a-licked yuh, too.

"But them logs. . . . beat me. . . . Yer logs now. . . . Yers an' yer gal's."

He gazed dreamily toward the river. The pipe sputtered and went out.

Bringing Home The Bacon

By EVERETT SHINN

A TWO PART STORY—PART I.

IT is nothing unusual to hear a man sing and play his own accompaniment. But it is considered rather astonishing for a famous illustrator of magazine stories to undertake the job of writing a story of his own. EVERETT SHINN is one truly famous illustrator who does not care how astonishing it is. He's done it. Furthermore this story of his, in its strictly modern way, expresses most emphatically that there is nothing much more mysterious than the mind of the modern young man.

CHAPTER I.

"I'LL SHOW 'EM"

"SHOW 'em what ye can do, son. Bring home the bacon. That's all I ask ye. Bring home the bacon."

The elder Lippet stood up, dropped the pump and looked at the tire on the rear end of his Ford, then kicked it. There was a hiss somewhere in the peanut brittle surface. Big blisters flattened and the faithful conveyor of the Lippets settled down into the graveled walk on an iron rim.

"She's gone flat again, Pop."

Asa Lippet looked at his son, Irving Lippet, swinging a stuffed dress suitcase into his son's face, whitewashed with talcum powder after a hasty shave.

"Ye—dern it—just like this town, son; gone flat but not again. Not again—town was flat when they found it; always will be flat. Town's kinda like a spare tire on the back-end of a truck—no use except fer a tight pinch election time. That's when they hawl us off and let us carry 'em home to fat road commissioners' jobs and the like. Vote's; that's all we're good fer."

"Well, I'm through with the town."

Irving Lippet swung his extra suit of clothes, his father's razor and a full bottle of homemade gin wrapped in a wad of brilliant neckties inside the smartest traveling case that Hoggins' store advertised—advertised not in the town paper, for Hoggins didn't believe that three agate lines could be seen very far.

He preferred his own window and his wares back of the only big piece of plate glass in Warsaw.

Irving expanded a little beyond the sumptuous breakfast his mother had prepared for him on his departure from home for the first time in his life.

"It's no place for brains. Don't you worry, Pop, I'll not only bring back the bacon, but I'll bring it sliced."

"That's the way to talk, son. We'll show 'em. We'll drop a few of these high muckey's in the muck—ah—dern stuck-ups. We hain't done no boot lickin' yet."

"Nope," said Irving Lippet in a way that carried little or no conviction.

His evasion of the uncomfortable subject of the Lippets' social status in Warsaw showed in the leap to his next remark.

"See Herbert Pendleton's patent leathers yesterday at the ball game, Pop?" he asked over the heaving back of his father.

"No, must have had 'em off during the game. Slipped 'em on again when the crowd cheered, I s'pose; then limped off to get his fill of Borton's soda. He's a wild youngster; he'll soon be takin' to milk."

Asa Lippet looked up after the third and last effort he would make to fill that tire with the good, clean air of Duchess County. There was a drawn look in his eyes. Asa was panting.

"Pendleton called my note at the bank today," he said.

This latter statement took his breath more than the physical effort of pushing air into the leaky tire.

"Don't s'pose, Pop, it's because Martha Coleson walked with me to the post office, do you?"

"Maybe; could happen that way, I s'pose. I'm pretty well strapped at present. I'd hate fer it to get about the town. Mother and me guess you are kinda proud."

"Proud? Say, Pop, I'm going to ride through this town some day in the biggest automobile ever made, and bump into Pendleton's bank by mistake; clip off the end of Borton's Drug Store, cave in the side of Hoggin's Arcade, drive through again and step out—no, lean out—and pay them for the damage; then buy the whole derned place and burn it up."

"No, son; I hope you don't do that."

Asa was considering his son seriously.

"I hope Warsaw will have a boom; grow like the deuce while yer away gettin' prepared to come back. The bigger the town the better the gloating."

Asa smiled and nudged his son.

"Bring the bacon; bring it here and we'll eat our first meal of it on a Saturday afternoon on the steps of the First National Bank."

BOTH Irving and his father considered the prospective meal of prosperity on the steps of the First National Bank, with a satisfied look of understanding—a coziness as if they had just fed well.

Asa Lippet scratched his head and dropped the pump in the tool box.

"There, if I drive careful I guess it will stand up till we get to the station. Hop in, Irving. Did ye kiss yer mother?"

Asa clipped down the spark and the car slowly pulled its weary body toward the house.

"Yes, Pop, she's inside cryin'," said Irving. "Better slide right by."

In the narrow drive, the shredded curtains of the Lippet conveyance wiped against the home of the Lippets on one side and a thick fragrant bower of lilacs on the other.

"Irving."

It was a tremulous voice and a tremulous wave at the kitchen window hailing the men in the car.

"Ye'll write, of course, as soon as ye get there?"

"Of course, Mom; postal of the Flat Iron Building. Good-by, good-by. Ouch, ye got my foot under the clutch, Pop."

And with what seemed a perfectly natural excuse to lean forward, Irving Lippet wiped a tear from his eye.

At the sidewalk, Asa held down on the brakes as Mr. Wilbur Pendleton was about to pass.

"Go ahead."

Mr. Pendleton waved a generous path for Asa Lippet and his son and the conveyor of the Lippets.

"Oh, that note, Asa; you'll be in before one o'clock today?"

"Why, yes, I expect to, to be sure, yes. Can I drop you at the bank, Mr. Pendleton?"

But that august person, thus addressed, smothered a grin at the rusted sides from which he would alight on the granite steps of the Warsaw National Bank.

"No, thanks, Asa. I need the exercise. I understand that your son is going to leave the old town."

Irving, suddenly driven by a desire to irritate, leaned forward toward the holder of his father's note in reckless derision.

"Yes, Mr. Pendleton, I'm going to leave the old town at the post."

"Can't hold the young blood, Mr. Pendleton. Got to spread. No room here."

Asa's face was smilingly approving, but his hand hidden from Mr. Pendleton was pinching hard on the leg of his offending son.

"No, that's right. No room here for those that can't make room," answered Mr. Pendleton, with a swishing intake of breath.

Irving flushed.

"Room," he yelled over the bent shoulders of his father, at the town's most powerful personage whose white voluminous side whiskers floated out on the spring breeze.

"Why don't you make some more room for your face or would it rather hide behind smoked glasses and whiskers and smiles you don't mean? Ye old fool."

"Irving!"

It was Asa's voice rasping and hard.

THE car shot forward into Main Street and bounded in the deep ruts and a voice sharp and clean-cutting went after it:

"Asa, don't forget the note before one o'clock."

No answer to Mr. Pendleton's reminder of how close the Lippets stood to the "poor farm" came from the car. "Now ye done it, boy; now ye fixed me."

And Asa Lippet shook his head sadly and gasped in utter helplessness. Anger suddenly supplanted his depression as he turned a cold eye on his refractory son.

"Glad you're goin' to New York. Wish ye had gone before ye was borned. Wish ye——"

Irving slapped the side of the rusty door and gave loud-voiced utterance to his animosity.

"They make me sick, and I don't give a damn. That hawk-faced son of his *fixed it*. *Fixed it* yesterday when Martha Coleson and I stepped into Borton's for a soda. What I just said didn't do it."

Irving in his irritation kicked the lid off the coil-box.

"I didn't do it."

"Maybe ye didn't do that," snapped his father, feeling for the rattling coil-box lid on the bottom of the car. In referring to the hidden features of Mr. Wilbur Pendleton that lurked in the white depths of his flowing beard, he may not have "done it," but nevertheless the remark riveted down the good intention of the bank official to extract "an eye for an eye" and principle and interest on the note held against

Irving's father by the First National Bank over which the benign Mr. Pendleton presided as President and Cashier.

"I don't want to fight with you, Irving, before ye leave us." Asa's voice had grown softer. "But payin' that note means borrowin' money to do it and I will have to put a mortgage on the quarry."

The old man's face was thoughtful for a moment. The sharp whistle of a locomotive dissipated the serious outlook from his eyes which resolved into a glowing tenderness as his arm slipped about his son's shoulders.

"Irving, bring back the bacon. That's all Mom and me asks ye."

"I told you I would and I will," said the wrathful Irving Lippet.

Then silence on West Main Street. But only in the car. They were on a bad stretch of road. The car wheezed, groaned, clattered and dinned its laborious way through ruts with rock bottom. Irving bounced. His father bounced, and the gin in the smart dress suitcase churned.

"Want you to promise me something, Irving," said the elder Lippet when they had cleared the worst bit of the road.

"Let's see what it is and see if I can," was the reply from his son.

In tone and gesture it contained that unknown ingredient that constitutes ninety percent of a Smart Aleck. For some time Irving cocked his ear for the question from his father, then snapped a match on his thumb nail, inhaled the sulphur with a cheap and popular cigarette and blew the smoke over the steaming radiator.

"Why don't you shoot, Pop?"

"Boy," solemnly began the elder Lippet. "I know you drink once in a while. So do I. I don't have to be asked to be careful about liquor, because I've stood it pretty well and no disgrace has come of it yet. But you, son.

"There's a lot of buzzing, black-tongued buzzards in this town that would like to pick yer reputation to pieces and spit it up in yer Mom's and my face. This goin' to New York will be advertised tomorrow all over Warsaw, that Irving Lippet has gone straight to hell.

"They will say ye got out because the prohibition laws was too strict and yer 'still' wasn't big enough to supply yer thirst.".

Irving choked and coughed over what might have been too much smoke.

Subconsciously a comparison was being formed in the mind of Irving Lippet between the smoke that choked him and the thin trail of blue that floated from a rusty stove pipe out of one of the tool houses in his father's quarry.

"Sure, you're right. Let 'em talk. I'll show them."

It led from the "still" that he and Steve Opaugh had rigged up. His father knew nothing of it.

THE mention of the "still" by his father had been merely figurative in a picture of modern freedom. Only Steve Opaugh and himself knew and consumed its output.

It had been installed in midwinter and smoke came from every building in the world. Now it was spring, and later when men sat astride rocks and ate cold food it would be dangerous to have a fire. Someone might question it. Oh, well, gin didn't mean so much to him now that he was going away from Warsaw. Steve Opaugh would be left to edge his nerves on its output.

Irving thought little at this moment of the effort that would make him an object of envy on his return to his home town.

It was only a matter of forgetting his soreness, his contempt for the town long enough to make his for-

tune, then recall it to mind and return in the double Rolls Royce monogrammed with an opulent crossing of the initials I. L. He could see it now.

Then Irving caught a casual wave from someone on the curb near the First National Bank building.

"Smarty," said Irving.

"Who's a smarty, son?" inquired Asa.

"Lew Merrick. Makes me sick."

"Hain't enough of him to swallow. Don't see how he can," said Asa.

Another stretch of silence and Asa waved his hand in the manner of one at the height of conversation, rather than an opening gesture.

"Am I right, son, about 'em?"

And Asa Lippet swept his head from side to side, including the inhabitants of Warsaw.

Irving's laugh was charged with derision.

"I'll show them."

Asa Lippet never thought to question his son as to a clarifying definition of "show them," taking only a comforting thought at their parting that his son meant heroic and honest application to some form of lucrative labor.

Suddenly a change came over the white powder-smeared face of Irving Lippet. A change from red-hot anger to a frightened ghostly pallor. He quickly pulled from his coat pocket a letter and stuffed it in his father's lap.

"Pop, there's a letter I forgot to mail. Don't *you* forget it."

"I wont, son."

ASA LIPPET brought the car to a rattling halt at the back platform of the station and turned off the gas.

"Well, son, we wont have much time to visit. Here she comes."

Asa Lippet slammed the door of the car ineffectually and scraped his smart dress suitcase jauntily over the sagging mud guard; shook hands with his father and walked boldly, firmly and defiantly past the two Harper girls, respectively fifty-six and fifty-seven.

"Good afternoon, Irving," beamed Lettie Harper, the taller of the two human link cuff buttons as Irving called the inseparable sisters.

"Going far?" asked Hattie Harper, abreast of Irving.

"No," drawled Irving, with the manner of a tired world trotter. "Only to New York this time."

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!" It was that rotten little Coleman kid, taking the afternoon papers from the baggage-man, his father. "Ye hain't been more'n a mile out of Warsaw in yer life."

Irving did not answer. Just threw the smart dress suitcase up on the platform and climbed aboard for what was to be a much longer run than the trips he had made on the slow freight to his father's quarry not "more'n a mile out of Warsaw."

CHAPTER II

NEXT STOP NEW YORK!

THE air brakes released, the train started. Over the familiar ground between the station and the siding near his father's quarry, Irving saw many familiar things.

The last one he was now passing and it stuck up against the sky, dented and rusty. It was the stove pipe leading from the "still" of the joint manufacture of Steve Opaugh and himself.

It reminded him of the sample product he carried. So he leaned down in the shadow of the forward seat and unclasped the smart dress suitcase, unfolded a bundle of very lurid neckties and slipped out the bottle. He took a good swallow of the raw alcohol and put it back care-

fully in the best that Warsaw had to offer in blatant neckwear. Then he leaned back and blew forth his breath in a hot coziness.

A dreamy mood pervaded him. He let his chin fall into his hand and contemplated without contemplation the fleeting countryside through the open window.

Along with factories and scattered villages, distant and hazy in the first showing of leaves, there came a picture to his mind of a young, handsome man alighting from a train greeted by showers of roses and beautiful girls; a band tuned up to a heated fervor in a heartfelt welcome to the silent and stern young man on the steps of the Pullman coach.

He waved an imperious hand at the cheering multitude. "Back to your houses and get your belongings. I have bought this town."

They might strain to see who this princely youth was; whom he resembled, but Irving Lippet would not have to strain either his memory or his imagination.

Introspection was all he needed to gaze upon the dazzling self-conjured self of Irving Lippet returned to throw out the town.

He conjured pictures of the groveling populace, bank presidents and soda clerks, girls from the button factory and leaders of Warsaw society, salaaming in anguish before the magnate who would feel no more the loss of the money for the purchase of Warsaw and its county than Irving felt for the paper match that came gratis with his last purchase of cigarettes at Borton's Drug Store.

This he threw in the aisle, and thus he would throw Warsaw off the map if some day it did not kowtow to him.

He trailed out many such visions until he drew the curtain upon his troubled home life and slept. Some two hours later, when he opened his eyes, he found himself in a strange medley of sounds. The boiled-down essence of activity lay before him through the open window.

What a chaotic mess of directions folks took on their errands, he thought. What had become of the trees? And oh, yes—he was waking up—this was his destination.

In his still slumbering senses he tried vainly to show even to strangers that he was not fussed.

With all his smooth, jaunty manner he nearly knocked the front teeth of a small child down its throat with his dress suitcase in passing down the aisle. The train was starting, but Irving gained the door in one leap.

"Is this New York?" he breathlessly asked of the conductor.

"No, chief. This is Albany."

To Irving Lippet, Albany would suffice for the biggest city in the universe. Was he to live in something more gargantuan than the monster he was pulling away from?

He wished he had remained awake and gotten used to the gradual increase in the towns and cities in the approach to New York. New York would then be easier to accept.

To be blindfolded in Warsaw and have the bandage removed from his eyes on Broadway would be devastating to his sense of comparison. He would smother in its immensity.

A CONSULTATION with his timetable showed Irving many stops before Grand Central Terminal ended the list. So again came the wonders framed by his window and again unfolded the slick plans for "knocking 'em cold" at home.

He mused at the reply he hoped to get from that letter in his father's pocket. Its contemplation fanned the flame of hate he had for his

home town. If that letter brought the lines he wished from the one destined to get it, it would be the death-blow full in the collective faces of all Warsaw.

The letter was to Miss Martha Coleson, niece of the mighty financier, Mr. Wilbur Pendleton, bank President and custodian of morality in his unquestioned domain; intrepid church worker; pillar and prop of prohibition; fearless in his search after those with illicit thirst; a man respected by all that knew him.

This was part of the musings of Irving, and here, let it be known, Irving paused and held a mental barb ready to throw.

"Respected by all that know him, hey? Well, his family are the only ones that know him, and they live in Florida most of the time."

Station after station flew past with Irving engulfed in vengeance. Why would he still linger on the things he hoped would happen to old Pendleton and Borton and Hoggin and a line that dwindled out as their offense became less to the Lippets! Why spend his wrath on these people when the way to get at them was to be procured first!

"Sure," said Irving, half aloud. "Get the axe first if you want to cut down a tree. Get the gun first if you want to shoot a skunk."

Irving laughed outright. If he got Martha Coleson! If she would marry him, he could say, when he returned to Warsaw, that he was not driven by society's intolerance and oppression to New York, but that he had slipped down to get a new outfit of clothes and jazz records.

"New York! New York!"

"Dust yer hat, sir? Thank you, sir."

"Porter!"

"Yes, chief. Both these yours? Taxi? Follow me."

That's about all Irving Lippet heard when he stood in the doorway of the smoking car and peeped over piles of polished hat boxes, bags and traveling cases, smeared with labels.

"Circus troupe," thought Irving and just naturally smiled at a good-looking girl across the wall of leather bags.

He felt he was wedging rather neatly into cosmopolitan life. If the line of boys against Borton's soda-water fountain could see him now. If the packed grandstand in the ball field back of the button factory could glimpse the free and easy manner of one of them swaying in the vestibule of a mahogany-lined car, easy in his assurance of conquest, they would——

"Is that boy smiling at me or you, Porter?"

"I just can't say, Miss Van Norden, but I'll call a officer if you wish."

There is nothing to be placed after the porter's remark to Miss Van Norden. There was nothing to place it against, for it moved, a frightened thing, with blanched face, jostling a new dress suitcase at a crowded street corner blocks from the Terminal.

To Irving, trembling and apprehensive of an officer's restraining hand, New York had growled at his approach, while Warsaw, the despised Warsaw, seemed wreathed in a protective smile.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST ACQUAINTANCE

IN a rooming house, on a crowded street off Broadway, he found a room. It was four stories up worn carpet. From his window, looking down, he saw a wire screen, clogged with milk bottles and bits of paper, spread over skylights under

which girls busily shaped hats and spotted them with colorful flowers.

He left his dress suitcase and pulled down his vest before the streaky mirror in his folding bed.

He was to find employment at once. His father had cautioned him against sight-seeing except on Sundays, and his mother had extracted a promise of at least a letter every two days.

Disuse had dulled the edge of Irving's ambition but it had not neglected to hone up and strop a keener edge to his hate.

At the end of two weeks, after superficial efforts to procure employment, he was still thinking of "knocking 'em cold" back in his home town.

He guarded his animosity against the intrusion of employment until another week had shown him the ugly face of his landlady and her disbelief that he was waiting for money from home.

Two days later he opened a letter from his mother with crumpled bills in one of his handkerchiefs and read of the foreclosure by old Pendleton on his father's house; a loan had been refused on the worked-out quarry.

I know you're trying, but for yer Pop and Mom's sake, try harder. We've got to move back to the old place now and we're getting old. Your Pop says to tell you that bacon will taste just as good back there on the old farm as it will right here on Main Street.

Irving dropped the letter on his crumpled neckties and kicked a bottomless chair.

"Damn Pendleton! I'll show him! They will have to widen Main Street for the bacon I'll pull through there some day."

ANOTHER week had passed, however, before he found himself even threatened with employment while conversing intimately with a pure-white, agile youth at a soda fountain on Broadway. It was a "strawberry float" that drew them together in a slack hour near closing time.

The boy in white had come from a small town in Pennsylvania and he, too, had something he wished to take back to his home town.

"Knock their eye out! We'll do it yet, kid!"

And the soda dripping fingers spread a soggy cloth over the green marble counter.

"Stick around, kid, we need somebody. I'll speak to the boss. You'll be dragging down a wad in a couple of months. Sometimes I forget all about my town when some of these classy dames sits in front of me. Sure easy to get acquainted with. What ye doin' later?"

"Nothing," said Irving, smoothing back a sharp, starched point on his last collar.

"I'm through at twelve. Twenty minutes yet. We'll go to Honey House and shake a foot and——"

Irving's new-found friend placed his hands on his hips and melted with a seductive undulation in broken rhythm to his humming rendition of a popular air. He laughed knowingly and sprayed a soiled glass. Irving laughed, more with admiration for his companion than what his movements implied.

This boy was class. The words alone—class, dames, skirts, Janes, shaking a wicked hoof!

Imagine Irving with a vocabulary like that let loose at old Borton's soda fountain Saturday night—the center of admiration!

"Meet you outside in twenty minutes," said Irving, slipping from the perforated tin seat. "Want to get a new collar."

"Doll up, kid," and the white figure waved a wet hand.

"Doll up." Irving contemplated this expression of social prepared-

ness and dipped into the outer edge of the jam from closing theatres. "Doll up."

It grieved him that there was no one in Warsaw he could write to and load his letter with these easy, sophisticated phrases.

"Ah, they're all jay birds. They'd think I was 'nuts.'"

Be careful, Irving. "Nuts" was very popular a year ago and was even used in Warsaw.

A glass case confronted him holding columns of collars labeled with the names of great discoverers, statesmen, novelists, shining beacons of nobility and famous old masters.

Irving selected one, then bent two tiny flaps out under his chin and retraced his steps to the drug store to await his new-found friend and the prospects of the Janes at Honey House.

Only a short time before, Irving would have stood in the same spot and watched peaches roll by. Now he looked knowingly on *Janes* and *dames, dumb-Doras, dim-bulbs* and *dumb-bells*. His nose curled in disgust at his appalling lack of education.

"Here we are, kid," said Irving's fellow traveler into the early morning hours.

They stood in a doorway between two pillars of glass vivid in a flood of internal violet hues. Above them was a dazzling brilliance in countless electric bulbs in the formation of a gate, and in the center, the reddest of vicious red letters forming the words Honey House, and beneath a transparent sign reading:

IN THE GARDEN OF JAZZY JOY

"This is where you see the very best. What's your name? Mine is Roy Reamer."

"Irving Lippet's mine."

CHAPTER IV

BOOTS

THEY ascended broad checkered steps between badly painted vistas of oppressively close mountains; passed latticed walls that opened onto cardboard waves until they stood at a gate with white and gold posts, with slats that were glass like the pillars of the door, some purple, some yellow, green and red.

"Hello, Roy."

The voice was young and feminine and very near them.

Roy turned and shook the hand, arm and shoulders of a young girl, with marvelous black eyes—sleepy eyes.

Irving was later to know that this sleepy look came from a weighty load of mascara on her lashes that bore down heavily on her optic muscles.

"Irving," said Roy, "this is a great little friend of mine. Miss Loger, this is my friend, Mr. Lippet."

Miss Loger smiled and playfully pushed Roy.

"Mr. Lippet." Miss Loger accepted Lippet with tantalizing lips. "Hope he isn't a kissing bug."

"Say, kid, hands off. Let some other Jane find that out."

Roy Reamer grasped Miss Loger by the wrist and drew her masterfully toward him. He gave her wrists a slow outward turn, causing Miss Loger to draw up one foot and squeal just a little bit.

"Stop that; it hurts, Roy. You big stiff!"

"Don't make any more cracks like that, then. Promise?" and Roy turned just a little harder on her bracelet-festooned wrist.

"Stop it! Stop it!"

Miss Loger was laughing in this slight manifestation of cave-man cruelty. It did hurt a little, but it

wasn't maiming. She pursed her lips and drew nearer to Roy's face.

"Kiss me," she whispered.

Roy glanced about him and then drew away from Connie Loger with a small outlined pattern of carmine lips on his own broad mouth.

"All alone, sweetie?" he asked.

"No, Sheik, Babe's with me; dancing with that guy from up-state. Gee, she's sore with him and she's having one sweet time giving him the air. He sticks around wasting her time, then goes back to his home town without breaking the bill his father gave him to come to the city. She just told me this was her last dance with him. She's through now."

All this Connie said with pats at her hair and through a haze of powder that floated over Roy's new blue suit.

"Quit that, kid; what ye think I am —a potato bug?"

Roy looked over his powdered shoulder and nodded.

"How would Babe like my friend Lippet?"

"Sure nice kid all right. Babe's running in hard luck lately. She never got anything but a ride up to her friend's home town in his car and a couple of days in a new varnished hotel out of him. She's a good scout."

"Who's this guy with a car?" Roy asked, jigging in a small area to the quickening saxophones in front of Miss Loger.

"You've seen him. He's the guy that's got such a receding chin that he has to turn down his collar at the back of his neck to shave it. Name's Pendleton."

IRVING was breathing the sweetness of Honey House. He drew near the glass gate and watched bare shoulders dip and glide like a school of pink porpoises out of a black sea. Fingers sensuously limp trailed in the air over black coats; hair breathed back from fair temples by whispering gallants. Little bodies led through the buffeting maze of motion; red heels —green heels, shifting in a tantalizing inaction; bodies clasped and swaying in ragged rhythm; a clumsy ritual of abandonment; a feverish fantastic dance to the baying of muffled saxophones.

The world was crazy and Irving was a part of it. He couldn't just tell at what moment he had been transported into a realm of forgetfulness or when his rancor for Warsaw had unhooked itself.

He was watching a young man that stood near him; a young man with black hair like burnished coal. His eyes were shut and the heat of a tropical sun was under his bronzed skin. A rope of white flowers hung from his neck to a girdle of orange stripes—his shirt silky and rippling —and in his ears swayed green rings.

The strings of a ukelele moaned under his trembling touch and from his thick lips a murmuring medley of Hawaiian love songs. One was of a moon-swept edge against crooning melancholy waves; of a dusky damsel —waiting—a lover—lagoons—palms —kisses—love unending.

This young man who seemed to charge Irving with the lassitude and amorousness of faraway Pacific Isles, was one of the orchestra. He sang with a throttled-down emotion and was scarcely audible beyond where Irving stood.

It filled Irving with the tropics. Everything seemed to swim over an island of azure blue and bees spun like golden sparks in the hot sun, and flowers gave up their honeyed blood to them.

The young Hawaiian raised his voice and in the wail of love's high cry, pitched to a screaming trombone final note, it died out with the echo of silence. The music stopped and the young Hawaiian, his eyes still

closed, smiled with his thick lips drawn back over his pearly teeth.

Deafening applause followed and a clamorous appeal for more.

A voice in the crowd raised fragments of popular musical show numbers and finished with "Please do it again."

The orchestra leader smiled his pompous thanks and put down his violin, and the crowd melted away to their places at tables that skirted the dance floor.

A SUDDEN crash of brass and the room was in darkness except little luminous red lights marking fire exits. Then there was a faint tremulous drum tap which increased in sudden uplift to the muscular capacity of the drummer; then a sharp, deafening clip of the cymbals again; a swish near Irving like dry, waving, crackly grass; a puff of violent perfume; a blending of powder and grease paint and a clatter of glass beads.

Then suddenly, in the center of the floor, a long shadow from a crouching figure stretched to the tables while brown neck and breasts bent backward into a shaft of blue light.

A head slowly lifted framed in a mop-like blackness. Arms tremulously extended, and in a quivering awakening the figure slowly drew itself up, undulating and rippling in sensuous appeal in the concentrated moon shaft.

It swayed and seemed to unhinge from a structural rigidity; and to float a flexible contour to an appalling latitude to the time-keeping of hands that darted flexible fingers; to bare crimson heels and toes on the hard floor.

Beyond the edge of the blue light, in a haze of smoke, cigarettes here and there, in golden dots splashed and twinkled like fireflies in the dusky heat.

A chorus of six swarthy maidens, clothed with what was left of the grass plot that constituted the scanty dress of the principal, attended the Tropic Queen of Love and flitted from the shadows in seductive sweeps encircling the panting central figure.

Again the cymbals crashed and the spot light trailed like a live ribbon of blue across the floor to the thick glass eye in the ceiling and was gone.

In a faint whipping clatter of glass beads, the bare plump backs of the sun-kissed maidens jostled through the crowded tables and Irving blinked.

"It's not the caterpillar's B. V. D's. any more . . . pretty old stuff," whispered Roy Reamer, close to Irving, then added: "I'm dancing with my friend, Miss Loger. She's got a hot doll baby with her who's shaking the guy she's with. You'll meet her after this dance."

To the criminal libel of Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C Sharp Minor, Roy Reamer and Miss Loger edged out on the crowded floor.

Irving watched and waited until the dance was over.

In answer to the applause, the orchestra, with appalling audacity, oozed out in mingled strains the stolen chords of the Master Chopin. Modern composers, or rather decomposers, dare to hang on such powerful structure this flimsy and transitory jazz of their own weaving!

It was like clothing the Venus de Milo in a one-piece bathing suit. Monuments despoiled! Michael Angelo's "Moses" chipped down to a "Kewpie Doll" and the Sphinx and Pyramids held in copyright as trade signs for cigarettes and beauty lotions.

Such is the load the truly great must carry! Their creations frequently are hat racks for impostors!

But Honey House was not built,

decorated and maintained for sticklers of purity in art or morals.

Here music was contrived out of patches of this and that masterful design and sewn together and controlled under a time beat of popular favor—a merging of sloppy sentiment and negro spirituals strung on the ponderous and substantial skeleton of great tonal masters.

But this is jazz. It is of the moment and so is Irving Lippet.

He had but half heard his friend. Even the devastating suggestiveness of the South Sea Island maidens crawled slowly like snails in his consciousness beside the quick, ravishing glance he had gotten from a girl on the crowded floor. His blood quickened and he drew closer to the gates, awaiting the rhythmic tide that would carry those eyes past him again.

They came once more, her black lashes lifting slowly like dusky sea birds' wings over an ocean of blue.

Once he saw her close-cropped hair, a bronzed red, bobbing over her white, smooth neck and a ring on her finger that flashed a glistening wink from over the shiny lapel of a dinner coat.

EVER since Irving's arrival at Honey House he had subjected every girl to the process of elimination down to the one that would give Warsaw the biggest jolt; and here she was edging her way through young men and girls that sought their tables.

She passed close to Irving, very close to Irving, and Irving shifted his balance in time to be very close to her. She hadn't in passing given any sign of her previous interest, and Irving let his gaze go back to the dissembling dancers.

His thoughts turned to the man that had held her in his arms, with a little bit of hatred for whomever he might be. To Irving her ravishing glance had reduced all masculinity to mere supporting shadows on the dance floor. He could never tell just what her escort looked like, except that he wore a dinner coat with a shiny lapel.

And—what is this? At the further side of the polished floor in the surging crowd at an entrance between the tables, Irving caught sight of a shiny lapel on a dinner coat.

The young man's face, half turned above it, showed again further in the crowd and then full toward him, but in an obscurity of deep amber light, so that his features were blurred. Nevertheless, Irving felt as if he were being ground between millstones of jealousy.

This man was so like Herbert Pendleton, son of the President of the Warsaw National Bank, that Irving was relieved when he strained past the beaming smiles of Roy Reamer and Miss Loger to the polished black hair and shiny lapel that disappeared down the scenic staircase.

Roy came up to Irving and wheeled him around, and Irving Lippet stood transfixed, gazing into the big glistening blue eyes that had held his interest on the dance floor.

He was uncomfortable and unprepared for this meeting. There was no time to pat his tie or shape his figure. A glance in a mirror set in a wall support reminded him of the particularly bad cut of the lapels on his coat.

Irving was swallowing his embarrassment and fumbling with his fountain pen that thrust its business-like nickel head out of his vest pocket when Roy spoke through a cloud of exhaled smoke.

"Miss Boots, I want you to meet my friend."

Roy glanced at Miss Boots' face and noted something strange in its sudden placidity, and with a quizzical

look he indicated Irving with a nod of his head.

"Know him, Boots?"

"No-o," and it came very slow and uncertain from the crimson lips. "No—and I'm not so sure of that."

She went on in an even tone, then suddenly snapped out of her somnolence and showed an amazing space of beautiful white teeth. She drew nearer to Irving, still smiling, but the blood had gone from under the rouge, giving her cheeks a slight purple tinge.

To Roy Reamer, Irving's eyes seemed to focus a little too searchingly on Boots, yet full in his gaze, she extended her hand to him.

"My name's Lippet, Irving Lippet," and with every word addressed more heat was driven to his face as he touched her hand and as he realized that it stayed in his own.

"Is it? My name is—is—is Babe Boots."

Color was coming back to her face. Miss Loger gave out a little conciliatory gesture and laid her hand on Irving's shoulder.

"Miss Boots is *the* Babe Boots of the Follies."

"Gee! That's great," said Irving, thinking of Warsaw, and daring to think still further of a possible alighting from the train at the Warsaw station with "Babe Boots of the Follies." "I'll go see you tomorrow night," he added, with much warmth and surprising nearness.

"There's a couple of huskies that will have to pass out before you see me. I am an understudy to an understudy with lots of time on my hands. Let's dance."

"Gosh darn it," said Irving to himself, forgetting the social phrasing of his present locality.

A LITTLE closer together, Babe Boots and Irving Lippet started out on the dance floor and out on a spree of mutual interests that lasted for several months.

Every night after that he was at Honey House or at Coney Island or on Sundays at Long Beach.

They didn't see much of Roy or Miss Loger at the end of the first week. Irving felt that dropping into Roy's soda fountain was a little under his speed, and the last call there was made ten days after he met Boots.

If the sophistication of the average youth at Paradise Park was a little bit ruffled at Boots' splendor, what could be expected of unsophisticated Warsaw? So Irving mused on the time that he would alight from the Pullman and destroy the peace of mind of his home town.

Once or twice he fretted over the possibility of Boots knowing Herbert Pendleton. Now that was over and in the pile of discarded suspicions; for Boots had told him as she kissed him:

"Why, Irv, he's just a guy in the carpet and rug business and he suggests housework and I had to shake him."

This was a relief to Irving, for he knew that Herbert Pendleton was not in any kind of business and it pleased him, too, that Boots loathed any sort of domesticity.

CHAPTER V.

NEIGHBORS

OF course Irving had told Boots that he was a broker and shared a three-room apartment with a law student and Boots had told Irving that she lived in a very smart apartment on Riverside Drive.

All was as stated until Irving traced her telephone number by her address and found she lived near him in a rooming house and Boots saw Irving leaning out of a window in

his shirt sleeves two doors from where she lived on West Forty-fifth Street.

Pretense stopped here and they settled down to the social bluffing that they could share in each other's presence.

After "office hours" each night following the meeting of Boots at Honey House, Irving leaped three steps at a time up four flights of rickety stairs to his room with exultant expectancy in the remaining hours until another work day dawned.

He spent hours with Boots; dancing, dinner, a shot of—and Irving, on this particular night, drew a pint bottle filled with colorless liquid out from under a crumpled dress shirt in his top bureau drawer—gin. The moment that he held it to the light he could see the rusted stove pipe leaning over the slab roof of a tool house in his father's quarry.

Gin! Steven Opaugh came and sat astride a blue stone boulder and blinked in drunken good humor at Irving's eloquent tirade against "Warsaw's uppishness."

When the bottle went back under the crumpled dress shirt, Irving saw the quarry passed over into the greedy hands of old Pendleton. He saw the foreclosure on the quarry and the forced retreat of his family down the social ladder.

He saw something else, and in its symbolical form it lay in strips, neatly sliced; and his father and himself, the proud and haughty "go-getter" of the bacon, sat on the front steps of Warsaw's First National Bank and munched its crisp brown edges.

His reverie became a bit disturbing, as he could also see the "bacon" hung almost out of sight above him.

But Hi! Ho! There was lots of time to climb, and some day he meant to take a day off and go get it.

THEN, with methodical exactitude, Irving laid out on the crater-shaped bed his apparel for the evening: his new tuxedo, marked down and very much cut up to fit him; a striped vest he had bought from one of Warsaw's boys, but with new buttons. Boots had given him these buttons.

He had admired them and Boots, out of a five-dollar bill, which she had borrowed from Irving, had gone in and bought them and a lip stick, powder puff, a nail file and some orange sticks for herself.

Then, in the line of adornments, he placed a spick and span shirt with many pleats; a string-tie that was still in its glazed paper wrapper; a pair of nearly dry lisle thread socks; then his latch key, some change and a cheap shiny pocket flask.

Then a shadow passed his open door.

Irving had lived in this room ever since his arrival in New York and not once had he seen any one on his floor except his landlady, Mrs. Snyder, or a slatternly maid.

It was neither one of these; for Mrs. Snyder always prefaced her ponderous self by an advance asthmatic hiss and Tillie always announced her coming with a tin bucket scraping the balustrade and disgruntled mutterings to herself.

He was in his room so seldom, beyond a hurried dressing to get out again, that thoughts of other occupants except Mrs. Snyder and Tillie never entered his consciousness.

Once in a great while, Sunday afternoons usually, he could hear low, intermittent chords from a violin, but of what he could hear of the music as it came to him piecemeal, he felt sure he neither wanted to hear it complete or see any part of the person that caused it. It just wasn't Irving's kind of music.

He knew that the high-brow ele-

ment of Warsaw put this kind of record on their phonographs and turned them toward an open window while the person that put it on was out in the garden at the back whistling jazzy stuff.

It had been so low, usually, this music, that Irving thought that the violin tones came from next door.

He judged himself to be the only roomer by the relentless and terrorizing claw of Mrs. Snyder, thrust from her door every Thursday for Irving's room rent. Now, possibly, some other person would have to run that gauntlet.

Irving paused, motionless and listening. A key was being tried in a lock out in the hall. A key in a lock without Mrs. Snyder turning it meant an authorized lodger.

The key rattled, scraped and rattled again while Irving went about his room collecting the stray bits of dress to complete his fitness for Honey House later on in the evening.

The key without ceasing continued its stubborn fight against closed iron jaws.

Out of a closet and with great care Irving took a bundle of folded cotton and unwrapped it—two shiny patent leather dancing pumps; and Irving, using the horn that came with their purchase, drew them on.

They satisfied and Irving wished for quiet contemplation, but the key wouldn't have it; so Irving, turning from right to left, looking at the shiny sides and heels with every step, worked his way to the open door and looked out.

At the further end of the hall a young woman could be seen in the dim flicker of a gas jet working with the key.

"Maybe it's the wrong key," Irving sang out.

"No it's not. It's just stuck."

"Maybe I could do it," said Irving, pulling in the satin straps across the back of his vest.

"Oh, thanks. There! No, I thought I had it," came a tired voice. "But I haven't."

And with a sigh, the young woman sagged against the door frame.

IRVING walked toward her, testing the snugness of his new dancing shoes; and while he tried his hand on the stubborn key, he worked his toes about in the glistening pumps with a great deal more interest than the key in the grip of stubborn mechanism.

"Let me try again, you're going out and—and—I don't want you to—to——"

Her voice was very soft and it contained a little flutter of anxiety.

"To what?" said Irving, turning suddenly with a vigorous twist at the key, and knocked a rather heavy roll of music out of the young woman's hand, so that it struck the floor and opened out into curly sheets.

"Wear your fingers out," she said with a quick little smile, and quickly picked up the music as if it were something of which she should be ashamed.

"Please stop; your fingers will be gone."

"No they wont. There! She's open," he said, and Irving pushed back the door in a flood of light that came streaming through the frosted window from a giant theatrical sign. It covered most of the theatre and hit the eye with a harsh green in a strip of bulbs that steadily gleamed "The Two of Us" inside a border of wiggly pink.

"Gee!" said Irving, "Mrs. Snyder saves on this room. The theatre ought to send her a bill for light."

Irving stepped into the room between a washstand and a bed that with its chipped robin's egg blue

enamel frame spread over most of the room.

"Gee!" said Irving again. "I don't see any curtain. How do you sleep with that in your face?"

His observation and question were made full in the glare of the theatrical sign.

"I manage. Light doesn't bother me; generally too tired to notice it," said the naturally presumable Miss Mary Bates, for Irving was reading this name on an opened envelope on the washstand.

"Your name?" he said, glancing at the envelope.

"Yes, that's it."

"Too bad this isn't my room. I'm never in when the lights are on," said Irving, with a full consciousness that he was swelling his chest and at the same time having more interest in what this assertion implied than its effect on Miss Bates.

When the door was first opened, he could see that she was not pretty, dressed poorly and was too thin. Yet there was, without it being openly accepted and said aloud, a compelling something about her or Irving would have gone back to his room.

"Ever use that?" asked Irving, pointing to a gas fixture on the side wall which held a bedraggled hat and several odds and ends of feminine apparel over a broken globe.

"No, I don't need it, and I'm not in very much myself after the lights are on."

"No?" said the surprised Irving. "Work?"

"Yes."

"Sleep all day?"

"No."

"You don't work day and night?"

"Yes."

"What at?"

"Department store in the day time —and—and——"

Miss Bates had a peculiar breathless nervousness at this moment, and for a moment she twisted a cheap string of glass beads at her throat.

"And then?" urged Irving, but with very little interest to back it. "And then what do you do at night?"

"I go to St. Luke's Hospital."

"Nurse. Oh, I see."

AS Irving asked no further questions, Miss Bates seemed relieved when he turned abruptly and with a boyish playfulness, rather than a deliberate intention to draw the conversation into more intimate channels, pointed to the shadeless window.

"But what about the shade? You live in this room and it's like all outdoors and——"

Miss Bates passed Irving's eyes with a quick little smile and Irving followed the movement of her head to an open closet door.

Very much separated were the things that lined its interior. There was a brown skirt, a batik waist, then a skip over water pipes covered with dirty white paper to a dazzling glimmer of tinsel and some sort of jacket with gold braid. This tinselly thing held Irving's attention.

He stepped toward the closet as Miss Bates pushed the door fast.

"That's my dressing room, back of that door."

She was laughing now and a brown toque was being lifted from an abundance of tumbling golden curls. Irving noticed, with even the whiteness of her teeth and the undeniable beauty of her hair, she was not what he called good-looking.

She tossed her hat aside and sat down on the bed. Irving watched her frail delicate figure for a moment and then nodded toward the closet door.

"Say, that music roll and that sparkle in the closet—are you in the show business?"

"No," she answered, very definitely, avoiding his further glance.

Even as he said it, Irving knew that it was a stupid question to ask of a figure that just wasn't and a face that just wasn't and—when he knew that Boots *was*.

Every human being has some particular point of beauty. It may be lost in the general effect of ugliness and a hat may cover it, and right here Irving was robbing Miss Bates of her one transcending bit of beauty, her hair.

He was, in his mind, and unknown to two young ladies, deliberately trading the golden and airy luxuriance that crowned Miss Bates like the aura that one might expect to see over sunflowers, for the henna rusted locks of Babe Boots.

Miss Bates, had she known Irving's mind, would have thrilled to the tips of her little feet, not at the loss of her hair or to find that she had a strange brown assortment of kinky split ends in place of her own, *but* that her hair had been noticed at all. And soaring above all impossibilities would be the fact that *Irving* had been the one that had noticed *her* hair.

Irving was leaning against the door frame that led to the hall and twisting his toes about in his shiny dancing shoes in comforting self-approval as she jumped lightly to her feet.

"You will be terribly late and you are going out, aren't you?" she said.

"I'm never late where I go unless I get in for breakfast."

And again Irving stretched flat by his swelling chest the pleats in his shirt that he was wearing for the third time.

"Do you ever go to Honey House?" he asked.

"Honey House?" she repeated after him, as Irving turned into the shadowed hall.

He did not see the face back of him. It had suddenly gone white and there was a frightened look in her eyes.

Irving's obsession for Honey House made very little difference whether any one answered him or not so long as he talked about it; so he took for granted that the poor, frail young woman in the doorway had never had the joy of its floor.

"Some classy stand, that; nothing like it in town. Class, nothing but class."

Miss Bates was closing the door while Irving backed down the hall as he talked.

"You ought to go," he continued. "Great orchestra, there, *marvelous*. All new stuff. There's a little kid there, just your size. Some trick she is. Plays the trombone. Stunts, you know; makes it laugh. The darn thing cries like a baby, mews like a cat and sings. Gee! She's great, just like a canary bird. She's the leader; writes her own music; got lots of pep. But —but——"

The soft golden curls at the half-closed door fluttered just a little as Irving threw up both his hands.

"She's a fried egg."

IRVING was not aware that Honey House had been in its decline. To him it was the apex of gaiety, the high pulse beat of life. If packed attendance meant popularity, surely then Honey House was favored, particularly favored.

But under this seeming approbation there was a fomenting unrest. It was a changing crowd. They came and went; but in these latter days did not stay to use their money up in this one spot. It was this unrest, a hidden kick against the antiquated manner with which Honey House served up its music. It was jazz, but not up-to-date jazz.

Unknown to Irving Lippet on his

first entrance into Honey House, the manager, Mister Pirot, was conferring with an innovation. This innovation was a slender girl nervously twirling her sensitive fingers before the business-like stare of Sam Bogel, owner of Honey House.

"We've got to do something, kid. It couldn't be worse than it is. Looks like big business, but it's the bunk. Dress up anyway ye want to. But get me, no salary till ye make good. If you can see yer way to an agreement to that, the bandstand's yours tomorrow night."

The little innovation could stand it and in another night a clashing newness greeted those that came to scoff but remained to sway.

To even Irving the rocking rhythm, the drone of saxophones and this splashing, wiggling girl orchestra, led by the most daring hideousness in make-up, surpassed the musical discard he had thought perfection.

IRVING was at his door now and could see the dazzling silhouetted edge around the golden curls in the doorway at the front of the hall.

"It must be great," came a tired little voice.

"You'd like it," waved Irving.

"I'm sure I would. Thanks for getting my key out."

"Don't mention it," said the gracious Irving and passed into his room.

His door slowly closed and another door slowly closed, leaving the fourth floor in darkness; and in the light from the electric sign across the street, a thin figure shivered and golden curls were damp at the ends where they hung against thin wet cheeks.

"*But* she's a fried egg."

As Miss Bates moaned and staggered to her bed, Irving in his room was slipping on a high-waisted overcoat whistling one of the popular airs at Honey House, while hot tears dropped on the original score held in the hands of a young woman who lay across a robin's egg blue enamel bed. From far away came Irving's flexible whistle in almost a perfect duplication of the trombone at Honey House.

Then his door opened and still whistling "Kiss Me, I'm Yours," he paused and dropped his high notes almost to a lisp as he looked at the long, thin, white light under a door at the other end of the hall.

Then, raising his whistle to a flooding volume, he thought Babe Boots perfection, in everything but hair.

As Irving's course down the creaky balustrade diminished, the white light under the door at the end of the hall grew wider and a thin, drooping figure looked over into the gloomy depths and sighed as the street door closed.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPAREDNESS

NIGHT after night following the refractory key incident, Irving dashed up the four flights to his room with interest unabating in the hours to follow with Boots.

Sometimes he would see Mary Bates sitting in her room and he would glide unnoticed to his room and consider himself lucky. At other times he was annoyed that she did not look up and at least wave, while he was clanking his key about in his lock.

On these latter nights, there was generally a shadow on his spirit, a dimness caused by Babe Boots drawing down her eyebrows and furrowing them in disapproval of some trifle she did not like about Irving.

On these occasions he slammed his door and, enveloped in a high dudgeon, would take a long pull at a cheap nickeled flask and rail ineffectu-

ally through his streaky window in the direction of Boots' domicile.

Sometimes when Miss Bates waved, over a piece of mending, he would hang about her door and chat of the things that interested him most.

Some weeks had now passed with Miss Bates sharing Irving's confidence. She listened to his plans for the surrender and absolute capitulation of Warsaw, of which she never approved, and in defense of her opposition at the war council, she had once told Irving:

"I am much more interested in what General Irving Lippet's plans are for the siege of Warsaw than in the day of surrender. Warsaw will fall if you are strong enough to take it. You have to fight and you are forgetting what this country went mad about several years ago—preparedness."

"I'm ready," Irving had said, and suddenly the heavy tread of a marching force was borne to his ears.

It was Mrs. Snyder's ominous puffing on the stairs and Irving's testing of his every pocket and Irving's flush of utter helplessness in the advance of the enemy.

Miss Bates knew that here at first hand was an illustration of what she was trying to show Irving.

"Mr. Lippet, got my money?" came like a blast from an icy gun at the end of the shaking balustrade.

"I was—er—just coming down to see you about that, Mrs. Snyder. I'll stop on my way out," said Irving over his shoulder, his back to Mrs. Snyder, and unseen by her was the embarrassed flush of deception.

"See that you do or give up your key, young man," came from the bombing tongue of the suspicious landlady.

AFTER she had gone, Miss Bates looked at Irving and the lie that was so easily slipping from his boyish lips and said very quietly, "Preparedness."

"Oh, the devil! You don't understand. You can't expect me to *work* all day and sit in my room at night and never have any fun, can you?"

Irving was momentarily awed by the swinging arms and nervous animation until she sank back on the bed and deliberately cried.

Irving felt a little as if he might be wrong, but the submissive and curled-up little body and the penitent sobs smothered in the golden curls only made him ashamed of women that stuck at small trifling milestones and had no really great vision.

He was gaining strength under this self-applied uplift and to encourage it he had something to say himself.

Miss Bates straightened her thin little body at a point in Irving's recital which invariably ended when a pause for breath was demanded.

"I'll show 'em. I'll show 'em. Watch me."

She could not help it. She was braving almost a certainty in a break of their friendship in what she was determined to say.

"*They* are watching *you*. All of Warsaw's watching you and you are handing them the biggest laugh they have had for years. Just a minute, Irving, don't stop me."

A little fire seemed to be burning in the eyes, in the shadow of the golden curls.

"Please, Irving, don't go. I know you don't want to listen to me because I'm not pretty and I—well—we don't go to Honey House together and I don't encourage you to spend all of your money on me. But if Babe Boots agrees with you that 'knocking 'em cold' is to be the aim of your life, you're up in the air with gladness in your heart for a real friend that understands."

Irving did seem on the point of leaving Miss Bates, but at the mention of Babe Boots and her understanding of him, he turned and confronted the shaking Miss Bates.

"And why shouldn't she agree with me that it would be fine to get back at my town? She comes from a small town herself and she says that she is going to get back at hers. You can't understand it, that's all."

"Oh, yes, I can. I came from a small town myself. And I am going back to it some day, but not with the spirit you have. Not to show them how smart I am, but to give them something they never had."

"I'll give them an eye opener, I will," said Irving with flamboyant dignity.

"That's not what I want to give them. I'd like to give them a little bit of good music."

"Music!" Irving was disgusted. "What kind of music?"

"Good music."

"I'd like to plant Honey House in the center of Warsaw for just one night."

"And I would like to plant just a modest little hall in my home town, but I would want a very great orchestra in it."

"Couldn't get anything better than the orchestra at Honey House. Get the girl that plays the trombone and let her write you some jazz; that will get 'em."

IN spite of herself, Miss Bates could not stay the sweet comforting sinking of her body. She looked at Irving with a smile that was really substantially pretty, and Irving would have found it so if he had not been so consumed with himself. She smiled again, rather less expansive and a little wistful.

"Don't let's quarrel, Irving. You are sure you are all right and Miss Boots thinks you are right. Now," she continued as she got up, "isn't it time to go out and make New York sit up?"

Irving could not understand himself. Here was a young woman kidding so close to insult; yet he found he could not get really angry at her.

He resented the things she said about his thinking more of the day he arrived as lord of Warsaw than how to make himself a lord before he arrived as one. He disliked her because it was true.

"I wish you could see Honey House —just once. You know—I——" —just here Irving paused, for he was about to confess a weakness; a point in his armor where an attraction at Honey House was sifting through.

"You know, Miss Bates, I'm stuck on this Babe Boots I've talked to you about so much. Well, she gets sick of Honey House and wants to try some other place; but I tell you I'd miss that fried egg toy leader of the orchestra. I spoke about it once to Boots and we quarreled.

"She's—you know—jealous. So I have to keep that part of it to myself. Understand, I'm not stuck on the fried egg, but I'm just all the nuts on the tree for what comes out of that trombone."

"You're a dear boy; just a dear boy."

And before she knew it, or Irving knew it, Miss Bates had kissed him; also, to the great relief of both of them, it was unnoticed.

"Please bring me back a new tune, Irving. I love them and I can whistle them to my patient in St. Luke's Hospital."

"Sure I will, and who's the patient?"

"My sister. Just getting over an operation. Used to be in the department store with me."

"Oh," said Irving.

"Good-night," whispered Miss Bates.

"Good-night, kid," and Irving skipped along the hall to his room.

CHAPTER VII.

THIS DAY!

A NIGHT came, some months later, when the ailanthus tree in the front yard was sticking little green tongues out into the hazy warmth and on one of these spring evenings Irving clipped up the rickety stairs four at a time.

On this particular night, still panting from the climb to his room, Irving stood in front of a streaky mirror and waved a handful of yellow bills at his smiling reflection. A handful of easy money. A windfall in the shape of a lucky forty-to-one shot on Fleet Foot to win.

Although the total winnings were divided with a fellow gambler, Irving's share gave his waist line a certain corpulence when stuffed in his vest pockets.

For a moment he contemplated the small archipelago of freckles that lined over the bridge of his nose and spread a few outlying brown islands under each eye. He scraped at them, screwed up his nose and stuck out his tongue.

What was the difference whether he had freckles and used his safety razor with a rarity so infrequent that he had to learn its mechanism between each shave? What did it all matter? The freckles would fade, and the downy cheeks would some day turn to verdant stubble.

But the opportunity that this day offered would never come again. This day! Ah! In one sweep at the bacon he had unhinged a shower of gold and two thousand dollars had splashed into his lap.

Fleet Foot had come through with a certainty at what he was going to do to Warsaw. He had telephoned Boots and had heard the little joyous gasp at the mention of his winnings.

"Kid, I have to hand it to you; you are a Napoleon," she had said, and Irving here in his room, in sweet memory of the occasion, was saying aloud: "Gee! Wasn't that great of Boots? That doll baby has read a lot. Called me 'Napoleon.' Sure. We both took a chance. He made good and I will."

The two thousand dollars cast a golden fragrance over the world, leaving Warsaw the one spot where it had not sifted; but it was soon to be assembled and dropped like a bomb in the center of the town.

The amateurish aspirations of Napoleon were as nothing to this onslaught; so it is of little wonder that the spring breeze carried the emperor's memory of Waterloo beyond Irving's room.

Irving was in front of his mirror holding his coronation robes in the shape of a brightly checkered coat when the balustrade creaked and Miss Bates passed his door. Irving waved cheerily, singing out in the possession of his good fortune.

"'Lo, Mary, be in to see you in a minute."

"All right, Irving," Miss Bates replied. "You seem happy," she continued, as she passed along the hall to her room.

"I'll say I am."

IRVING arranged two spreading golden fans, one on each hand, composed of crisp, yellow certificates tucked between all of his fingers twenties in plenty and a few green ones for color accents. When he felt sure that Miss Bates had sufficiently settled down he put his hands behind him and sauntered up the hall.

"Sit down, Irving. It's warm, isn't it?" she said in greeting.

"I like it."

With modest unassuming grace

Irving took the loose-backed chair across from the blue enameled bed and leaned back and placed his hands on his knees.

"What's that?" she asked, staring at the fluttering bills.

"What's what?" said Irving, staring hard at the ceiling.

"Irving Lippet! That in your hands! Money?"

"Oh, yes, that's nearly two thousand dollars' worth of money, and I didn't get it by sticking in my room after office hours, either."

"Irving!" Miss Bates was frightened.

"I didn't steal it, foolish. It's a bet, and I won."

"Won? You didn't earn it, then?"

"Not exactly. Fleet Foot won it, and I had the brains to see she would win it, and I had one hundred dollars——"

"Did you have the one hundred or did you borrow it?"

"Borrowed it, certainly. I paid it back and this is what I have left after getting a whole new outfit of clothes and things."

Irving paused and looked past Miss Bates to the flashing "The Two of Us" sign across the street and said:

"And a swell traveling bag, and I'm going back to Warsaw tomorrow."

"For how long, Irving?" Her voice was a little breathless.

"Ten days." Irving's voice was quite hollow.

"Alone?"

"Why—er—no. I may take a friend with me."

"Boots?"

"Boots? Eh—why yes—Boots."

"You are going to be married?"

"Married? Er — why yes—married."

MISS Bates got up from the bed and went to the window. Her back to Irving, her eyes, unseeing, staring, immovable, set in the glow of the big block amber tinted letters, "The Two of Us."

She could not prevent the convulsive shudder that, in passing, left her limp, as if some heavy roller had passed over her body. It came again, this time icy in its grip at her heart, singeing like bands of hot irons at her head.

Things were tightening, warping, disfiguring, and the amber letters in the theatrical sign across the street were losing their outlines.

The green frame was fading out—gone now. She was backing away or the sign was growing smaller—smaller—smaller—to a numbus far distant.

Then came sounds—Chopin—tinkling — Rachmaninoff — pounding — Mendelssohn's Spring Song—jazz—"I'm Yours"—color—flashes of blue light—waving arms. People were dancing under silver lanterns. Irving's face was very close—tight pressed against the snake-like [illegible] on Babe Boots' head.

Then the sign across the street signaled a white flash millions of miles distant and then came rushing, spreading bigger and bigger toward her, like the headlight on a thundering midnight express.

It struck and passed, and Miss Bates, lying on her bed, opened her eyes and looked up into the frightened face of Irving Lippet.

CHAPTER VIII

AMONG THE MISSING

"WHAT'S the matter, kid?" Irving asked anxiously.

"Oh, it's you."

That's about as far as she could get before her eyes closed again.

"Yes, it's me. You must have fainted," said Irving with concern

and perplexity about the frailties of women.

She was beginning to collect her scattered bits of balance and with some effort raised herself and assembled her reason in more coördinated speech.

"I'm not getting enough rest, Irving. I suppose that's it. I stay at the hospital so late every night, and I suppose that with the good news about my sister coming out tomorrow, and this heat—it's really oppressive to me—and then your good luck and happi——"

"You're out of breath, lie down again."

Irving bent over her for she seemed very near oblivion again.

"No, I'm quite all right. Just rest—that's all I need—rest. It's passing. Please go, Irving, I don't have to go to the hospital tonight. Please go and then I can sleep, just sleep, Irving—sleep."

She closed her eyes and sunk her golden curls deep with the leaden weight of lassitude in her pillow and Irving walked to the door.

"Can't I go to the drug store and get you something?" asked Irving. "I hate to leave you like this."

Irving felt a little sorrowful about leaving Miss Bates flattened on her bed; but he also felt it was about the way he might take his departure from a dog he might have patted that got more of fright than injury from a motor-truck.

Strangely, a little bit sad was Irving's face as he looked about the room and back into the dimly lit hall.

"I suppose that we wont live here when we get back. Boots will want something with more class than Mrs. Snyder's rooms."

And out of the pillow came Miss Bates' voice, sweetly admonishing.

"Oh, Irving, you couldn't bring Mrs. Lippet to rooms like these, after Warsaw thinking you must live at the Ritz-Carlton."

"What Warsaw doesn't know wont hurt them," was Irving's peevish reply.

"I am afraid for you that what Warsaw *will* know *wont* hurt them either," said Miss Bates very quietly.

"That's a sore subject, kid. Where would Napoleon be if he hadn't had any imagination?"

"Just where he is now, with or without it."

She was laughing, but Irving couldn't; and he waved his hands above his head to terminate or change this irritating subject.

"I wont say any more, kid. I'll see you in about ten days and tell you——"

"How Napoleon must have felt after Waterloo?" interposed Miss Bates.

"Not a bit, kid. Napoleon was a *has-been* before he went to Waterloo; an old guy, worn out before he got kicked out. I'm young and Warsaw is not Waterloo."

"No, Irving, but in my history, it was in his line of campaign. It was on his way to Waterloo."

"This is a different Warsaw. They are all poor fish; stuck-ups. Oh, what's the use talking to you? Good-by. Hope you get better. I'll send you a postal card of the stone bridge over Kirby's pond. Good-by."

And Irving backed into the hall and a quiet little "good-by" went after him.

IRVING dressed hurriedly and tucking dollars deep in his coat-pocket, put a safety pin through the double folds of money and silk lining of his new tuxedo and went into the hall.

He was locking his door when he noticed that he could not see Miss Bates in her room. Irving, thinking that she might be worse, called to her:

"All right, kid?"

"Yes, thanks. Much better," came her cheery answer.

"If you're not going to the hospital tonight, I might see you when I get back. I don't expect to be late tonight."

"All right; if my door's open, come in."

And Irving, with more important matters to command his attention, such as the terms of an unconditional surrender of Warsaw, with Irving Lippet as Dictator, and the final plotting of the joint arrival of Boots with him in the humbled Citadel occupied his mind in the descent to the street.

What she would wear and what he would wear; a consultation on luggage to be bought the following day and reservation to be gotten at the station—this was enough to keep him thrillingly busy at his lonely dinner.

After packing his new cigarette-case, he called for Boots, whence to a musical show, and then they taxied three blocks to Honey House.

On their arrival, it was apparent that it was not the Honey House of last night or of any night before. Everyone was in a particularly disgruntled frame of mind. Waiters at the tables were answering questions put to them about the orchestra. The manager was trying to explain something to several irate people that were leaving.

"Call that an orchestra?" said one man. "More like an explosion in a tin shop."

What was the matter with the orchestra? It had no control. It ran a riotous jargon of meaningless sounds. One could sense at once the trouble. The balance wheel was missing.

Miss Pep, the jazz pellet, the little leader of the orchestra, was not there. Where was that little piece of vivaciousness that played the trombone, the violin, the saxophone, bells, cornet, bones—and whistled? Where was she?

The spell of displeasure cast a shadow over Irving's spirit, keyed high in the prospects of the dawning of the day of his triumph. Added discomfort came with Boots' eyes turned on him in tantalizing torture.

"What's the matter, Boots?" Irving asked huskily.

"It's not the cat's smoking-jacket tonight, hey, Irv?" she said, poking her bare elbow viciously into Irving's side.

"Maybe your little fried egg is sick. You miss her, don't you, Irv?"

"Sure, I do. Don't you?"

"I'll say she's the whole works here. Say, Irv, aren't you a little bit stuck on her?"

"Don't be a nut. She's a fried egg."

"Say, kid, do you mean to tell me that you don't know that some of that is make-up? That green nose and—that's part of her stunt. I've seen her in the dressing-room and, believe me, she's not such a fried egg as you think. Of course, there's nothing to her."

And Boots' hands traveled quickly in sinuous ripples over her own fulsomeness.

AFTER several hours at another Broadway Cabaret, where Irving and Boots completed their plans for their trip, Irving took Boots home and left her with the usual crimson print of Boots' lips on his own. Three doors away, Irving could see the skeleton frame that held the dead lights of the theatre sign across the street and then the cheerless front and darkened windows in his own house.

A window was open in Miss Bates' room and he could have sworn that he saw something white flutter in it as he turned in at his door. In the

dim gas light burning its full capacity through the wad of cotton that Mrs. Snyder packed under the tip to keep down the pressure, he could see the door open at the further end of the hall.

"'Sleep?" whispered Irving, at Miss Bates' door.

"No," came a sleepy voice. "Take the chair near the door, Irving, and sit down and talk to me. Don't light the gas."

"Did you have a nice evening?" she asked when Irving was seated and puffing at a cigarette.

"I did not." Irving was emphatic.

"Why not?"

Somehow her voice seemed to have a little musical chuckle to it and it seemed a bit smothered as if her face were being turned into the pillow.

"Orchestra was rotten. The leader was sick."

"What? The fried egg?"

"Yes, the fried egg."

"Didn't you ask about her?"

"Certainly, I did. The manager was wild. The fried egg had no telephone. He said he went to her house himself, but she wasn't in. Something funny about it. She's a queer nut anyway."

Irving paused, caught his breath, and continued:

"Say, will you do me a favor?"

"Certainly," she said quietly.

"I am going to telephone to the manager tomorrow morning to see if he knows anything about that girl, so if I don't hear anything, I wish you would telephone him and ask him later in the evening and then the next day, and send me a telegram.

"There's his name and telephone number. Victor Pirot. And there's Warsaw. I'll go to the station for it."

Irving put a folded slip of paper on the washstand and breathed a little less excitedly.

"Gracious, Irving, but you are concerned, aren't you?"

"Maybe something might have happened to her, and say, I've a funny piece of news to hand you. Boots tells me that the kid isn't such a fried egg after all, that it's mostly grease paint. Hope so.

"Maybe all this idea of mine is funny to you, but what would New York be without Honey House and what would Honey House be without the little fried egg leader of the orchestra, and I sometimes wonder what the little orchestra leader would be if there wasn't any Boots?"

"Irving, I believe you like her."

"I tell you I don't. It's her music. She's too ugly."

FOR an hour more they talked and stifled yawns, their conversation being a mixture of Irving's feeling on the eve of his march on Warsaw, of his new clothes, of Boots' new clothes, and odd moments when he speculated on the strange disappearance of the little leader from Honey House.

At last Irving was saying goodnight and the tag end of conversation curled toward Miss Bates. Irving had asked her about the music rolls he had frequently seen in her room.

"I try to write music, a little; but I suppose I'm no good."

"How do you know? Say!——" and a mighty light, not the electric sign, was coming in on both of them.

"Say! When I get back, I want you to give me something you've written and I'll give it to the leader of the orchestra at Honey House and *if* she plays it you're famous."

"Irving!"

Her voice was joyous, and jumping from her bed she grasped his hand.

"You will give it to her?"

"You bet I will. The manager

knows me and he'll get her to play it. Got anything ready?"

"Yes."

And turning back into the room she toppled over a hat-box and came to the door again with several sheets of paper on which were written the score of her effort. Irving took it from her hand and read across the top in a delicate feminine hand:

"Come back when you're tired to me."

"Kid, that's wonderful."

"Irving, you promise you'll give it to the leader?"

"I do."

"Good-night, Irving. God bless you —and—I—I—hope you—you're very happy."

"Good-night, kid. Gee! 'Come back when you're tired to me.' Gosh! That's great: Good-night."

And two doors closed leaving the gas jet flicker until Mrs. Snyder came up at six o'clock to turn it off.

On the day following, Irving Lippet and Babe Boots and two immaculate traveling-bags descended from a Pullman (on the six fifty-three by schedule, but actually one hour and forty minutes late), to the platform at Warsaw station.

(*To be concluded*)

Shoes of Death

The farmer's son struggled back to consciousness and blinked up at the candle held in his mother's hand.

"Pa's took sick. You go git the doctor, quick as you can."

When the distant doctor came, however, the farmer was dead, a swollen corpse. He was told the man had come home from work, had his supper, taken off his shoes and gone to bed. The doctor after a hasty examination attributed the death to natural causes.

A few days later, the son was stricken in the same mysterious manner. The doctor saw the corpse but could offer no explanation. The only connection was that the son had worn some of his father's clothes.

Father and son being dead, the farm was sold, lock, stock and barrel.

A neighbor, among other things bought the late farmer's shoes. He put them on, and after pulling them off at night, was as mysteriously stricken.

A skilled doctor was called in this time and, suspecting the cause, applied the proper remedies and pulled the patient round.

The fatal shoes were carefully examined, and it was found that the two fangs of a rattlesnake with the poison bladders adhering to them had penetrated the leather and projected into the inside.

The farmer had been attacked unknowingly in long grass by the reptile, and he, his son and the purchaser of the fatal shoes had imperceptibly scratched their foot in pulling off the poisoned shoes.

Madame Monday

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

AS Henri Bouchard, who reviewed all the new plays for the *Apres-Midi*, the well-known afternoon paper of Paris, came out of the theatre after a first night, someone touched his arm. He turned and recognized his friend, Casimir Vignon.

"My dear fellow," said Casimir, "after this we need a drink. Wont you join us?"

"Us?" echoed Bouchard vaguely.

"Yes, Permit me. Mademoiselle Fernande Mirande."

From behind Casimir's portly figure, there appeared an apparition of such beauty and fragrance that Bouchard's eyes opened wide.

"Mademoiselle Mirande," explained Casimir, "is about to play in Verneuil's forthcoming piece, 'The Woman in Scarlet,' and I am sure she will be charmed to meet the famous Bouchard."

A white-gloved hand slipped into Bouchard's hand and gave it a gentle pressure.

"You will join us," Casimir repeated. "We are going to the café over the way."

Bouchard shook his head bruskly.

"I am sorry, Casimir, but it is impossible, quite impossible."

"Not even if I add my little petition, Monsieur Bouchard," said Mademoiselle Mirande in a tone of such entreaty that Bouchard hesitated, but only for a moment.

"Dear lady, it is very kind, but I regret. I must go home now."

"You have a home?" demanded the actress as if surprised. "But surely, a quarter of an hour now——"

"Another time, Mademoiselle. My excuses, Casimir. Good-night."

Mademoiselle Mirande stared after the tall retreating figure.

"What a droll person. Tell me about him. I know he can make or break an artist with one criticism."

Casimir smiled.

"He is a hero," he told her.

"He is handsome as a hero, but what has he done?" asked his companion.

"Remained faithful to his wife for six years."

"*Bon dieu!*" cried Mademoiselle Mirande in whimsical dismay. "Are you serious?"

"Never more serious in my life," said Casimir. "There never walked a kinder or more delightful fellow; but alas, he is the most virtuous husband in Paris. So, my dear Fernande, if you had any idea of fascinating him with those lovely eyes of yours, put that idea out of your head. If you must have a lover with influence, behold, I adore you myself."

"You, Casimir!" She laughed gaily. "You are a nice fat thing—for a friend, but for the heart, my dear, I demand something more romantic. It is a pity your friend is as you describe. What is Madame Bouchard like? Beautiful, fascinating, what?"

"Beautiful, in a cold way, a woman of few ideas. I have always wondered what a man of his intellect sees in her. I have dined there. We talked of mutual friends; but of books, art, the theatre, not a word.

She is not interested in his work,

except in so far as it brings him a comfortable income. They have a nice home. It is her work, her life, so far as I can gather.

At nights, she knits, sews, he reads or writes. They spend their evenings, except on his first nights, together under the lamplight, tranquilly, in the most bourgeois fashion. What a life!"

"And he is faithful to her?"

"*Ciel!* He is a paragon of happy husbands. He meets scores of pretty women in the course of the year, but you see yourself how little they affect him. It is a puzzle to me."

"It is a pity!" said Mademoiselle Mirande thoughtfully. "How can you call that man happy?"

"You have no chance, Fernande," said Casimir, "none whatever."

Mademoiselle Mirande smiled roguishly to herself.

"If what you say is true, then it is a pity. I am sure he would be adorable as a lover. Casimir, I am very thirsty. What about our drink?"

Casimir chuckled.

"A greater pity, too, since you are neighbors. He lives just around the corner from you, Boulevard Edgar-Quinet, number — number 27; yes, that is it."

"Poof!" said Mademoiselle Mirande carelessly. "I am no longer interested in the man. Don't be absurd. 27 Boulevard Edgar-Quinet, indeed."

BOUCHARD, as he walked rapidly toward the subway, was less disturbed by the undeniable charms of Mademoiselle Mirande than by an apprehension which had come upon him.

Was it possible that he was after all not so secure in his devotion to Marthe; that on this invitation being extended to him, he had suddenly felt a desire to accept it, and share the company of the actress?

He still seemed to carry with him the fragrance of her perfume, and the picture of her piquant face raised pleadingly to his.

At the corner, he hesitated, then with a determined step went on his way. No, it was impossible for him to think of infidelity to Marthe. She was a wife of such fidelity that to deceive her, even in thought, was a crime of which he was incapable.

He would as soon think of slaying a lamb which turned its trusting eyes upon him. That was the work of a butcher, not a man of his temperament.

Marthe was faithful to him, therefore he must be faithful to her. There was the final answer to any question.

He bounded up the stairs of the apartment, and fitting his key to the lock, entered gaily. Marthe was sitting in the little salon, under the lamplight, and as he entered she looked up placidly.

"Here I am, my angel. I came as quickly as I could. Ah, how nice it is to come back to our little home and you."

He kissed her as she sat, then went to get his slippers.

"And now I must tell you of the play."

"Yes," she said easily, counting her stitches, "but first let me tell you about the chairs to be recovered. I saw Fromentin and chose the stuff. It will be five hundred francs in all. You have no idea how happy I shall be to see these chairs covered. They were an eyesore.

"When the Poulards were here, I could think of nothing but that their eyes were on the chairs; and when they went, I could hear them saying: —'It's strange the Bouchards can't afford decent furniture!'" Bouchard laughed.

"But, my dear, what does it matter what they think."

"It does matter to me," said Madame Bouchard, "a great deal."

Bouchard was contrite.

"Of course, my poor dear, you have to look at your chairs many more hours of the day than I do. You did quite right to see about having them recovered. And now——"

"Now you will go and take your little supper," she said smiling.

And it was not till he was in bed that he was permitted to remember he had not said anything about the play he had just seen.

Bouchard was returning home to dinner two nights later when in front of him a young woman muffled in furs who had been stepping daintily among the slippery puddles suddenly lost her balance and fell.

He heard a groan, and running forward gallantly, raised the lady to her feet.

"Oh thank you, Monsieur," she said faintly, "I am afraid I have sprained my ankle."

"What a shame, Madame." He hesitated. "Let me call a taxi."

"I live here," she said, indicating the door of an apartment house. "If you will help me to the elevator, perhaps I can manage. But surely, it is Monsieur Bouchard?"

"Yes, Madame. You know me?"

"And why not?" said the helpless creature clinging to his arm. "Do not tell me you don't remember me—Fernande Mirande."

"Of course. Will you ever forgive me? Where were my thoughts?" he cried confusedly. "Now, lean on my arm."

He slipped his arm about her quite naturally, and assisted her into the entrance hall and into the elevator.

THERE was no question of his leaving there, and on arriving at her floor, he took the keys she offered him and opened her door.

With his free hand he switched on the lights, and then as she once more gave way, picked her up and carried her to a couch.

"How can I ever thank you?" she said gratefully. "What a nuisance I have been! If you will wait a moment, I shall call my maid. Julie!"

There was no answer to her summons.

"Oh *zut*, how stupid of me," she said, "I forgot. I gave her leave to go and see her sister. What am I ever to do? But you must go, I mustn't keep you, Monsieur. I am ever so grateful to you."

"It is nothing, but I can't run off and leave you like this. Is there anything I can do? Shall I call a doctor?"

"No! No!" she protested. "I am afraid of them. No, there is nothing, unless—but then——"

"What?"

"If you could take off my shoe."

"Surely!"

He bent and drew off her shoe.

She gave a tiny groan, instantly suppressed.

"I hurt you," he said penitently. "But you must do something for your ankle."

"If I could bathe it perhaps," she insinuated.

"Of course."

He hesitated.

"Your stocking, Mademoiselle?"

"Do you mind, my dear—nurse."

He accepted the rôle offered to him. After all there was nothing in this but the good offices of one human being to another.

"Thank you, my friend," she said with a flutter of her eyelashes. "Now, if you will continue your goodness, bring me a bowl of water from the bathroom—there."

Bouchard emerged from the apartment a little later, leaving Mademoiselle Mirande resting comfortably upon her couch with a book.

Two minutes after he had gone she

threw the book across the room, in a fit of pettish rage; for Bouchard had retired after conducting himself with the utmost courtesy and consideration for his temporary patient's defenseless state.

He had, however, given his promise that he would call next day in passing to inquire as to how she was, and considering this, Mademoiselle began to smile faintly.

For a time she lay with closed eyes, then briskly springing to her feet, slipped an apron about her and went out to the kitchenette to prepare her supper.

It was no doubt due to the ministrations of Monsieur Bouchard that a cure of the sprained ankle had been effected, which was little short of miraculous.

"I am a trifle late, my dear," said Bouchard to Marthe, as he entered.

Innocent as he was, he was nevertheless nervous.

She glanced at the clock.

"I wasn't watching the time," she said. "I have been so busy all day. And you, my dear?"

"Yes," he answered. "Oh, yes."

It was upon his lips, the story of the little excitement which had befallen him, but something held it there unspoken.

"The streets are so slippery," he added lamely.

She nodded, and rose.

"You must be hungry, poor man. Everything is ready. Put on your slippers. Are your feet wet?"

Bouchard felt the current of his affection suddenly deflected.

Slippers—wet feet—dinner.

He closed his eyes, as though to shut out the vision of a slender ankle, rosy, smooth, which persisted in recurring before them.

"Henri!"

"I suppose they are!" he answered meekly.

What a scoundrel he was!

"What would I do without you?" he said, and going forward kissed her with a sudden flare of passion, remorsefuly evoked.

She received his kiss without comment, smiling as she always did, that smile which was to him the sign and seal of her fidelity.

Seated opposite her at the dinner table, he talked rapidly with enthusiasm of an article he had in mind, and she listened, her eyes upon her plate, with her languid—"Yes! Indeed! That sounds interesting!"

And all at once he stopped short. He had a moment of terror. Surely he was speaking to himself in an empty room, the victim of an oppressive loneliness.

Then as suddenly as it had come, the moment passed, and Marthe was before him again, the light upon her carefully groomed hair, perfect in every detail of her toilet and her dress.

He passed his hand over his eyes.

"You are tired, poor dear," she said quietly. "Perhaps if you were to lie down for a little——"

He shook off his depression.

"If we were to go and hear a little music—" he suggested. "I think I should like to hear some music tonight."

"Not tonight," she shook her head. "We are very comfortable as we are. It is so damp outside. Let us stay home."

"Surely!" he agreed. "You are a wonderful woman."

The words had seemed to spring to his lips, but he knew they did not ring true.

SHE made no comment, however, and he was strangely relieved when, after the maid had cleared the table, Marthe resumed her knitting.

She was like Penelope, he thought, as he watched her, his eyes ostensibly on a magazine. Her knitting was as

symbolical of domestic fidelity as the embroidery of that paragon of unfailing trust.

What a lucky man he was! There was not another of his colleagues of the press who had a wife such as his, absolutely devoted to him.

He tried to show his appreciation. He made a good income. It was hers to command. He never asked her what she did with it. He spent little on himself, and had no selfish thought of his own wants.

As he came home next night, though he had left the office earlier than usual for the very purpose, he was still debating with himself whether or not he should inquire after the health of Mademoiselle Mirande.

Why had he promised, knowing that, as the most punctilious of men, he should have to fulfill his promise?

He was before her house, almost without knowing it, and walked past.

Then he stopped, shrugged his shoulders and went inside. After all, why not? A call of courtesy.

The door was opened by an elderly woman who looked at him inquiringly. Yes, Madame was at home. She took in his name and came back hastily.

"Madame will see Monsieur. Will he have the goodness to come in?"

Bouchard acted upon the invitation. He surrendered his coat and hat to the maid.

"This way, Monsieur!"

He entered the softly shaded room and paused. A merry laugh greeted him.

"Ah *mon ami*, you will have to forgive me, receiving you this way, but then you are my nurse, *n'est pas?*"

She was propped up amid many cushions. She presented a picture so charming, her hair in two long brunette braids, that for a moment Bouchard was taken aback.

"Close the door, Julie. What a draft! And now, my dear nurse, sit down and tell me the news. You will be glad to hear my ankle is nearly well, but I haven't been out all day."

She looked at him frankly and held out her hand to his kiss.

He sat down, almost timidly.

"What is the matter, *mon ami?* You seem a little sad today."

He looked about him, like a bewildered boy, staring at the disorder of this room, so unlike the neatness of Marthe's room; at the clothes over a chair; the stockings dangling over the end of the painted bedstead; the little shoes flung helter skelter.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked with a shadow of perplexity on her lovely face.

He raised his eyes to hers. They were filled with an inexpressible agony.

"Ah, *bon dieu!*" he said almost harshly. "It came over me the moment I entered here. I know the answer to these last few hours. I must be mad, surely. I know I love you."

She nodded her head comprehendingly.

"It is so strange," he continued, "and yet it seems so natural. We meet and at once all the years of my life are wiped out, wiped out forever. All my life so settled, gone in a moment. You, whom I see today for the third time have become the one longing, the one desire of my life.

"And what terrifies me is that you who are almost a stranger to me, are no stranger. I know you now as well as I should ever know you. I know that you foresaw this, perhaps you planned it; yet I love you all the more. How many years I have spent dead to my loneliness till you came into it, Fernande!"

Sound seemed to have died in his ears, numbed by the beating of his own heart, and the answering throb of the breast against it, so that it

was a moment or two before he was able to grasp what she was murmuring.

"I love you, I adore you, your strength and your gentleness, Henri, Henri."

Moments passed in that motionless bliss where speech is as nothing; where a sigh enshrines the romance of a century, and the touch of cheek upon cheek is the enchantment of eternity.

They were content to feel the closeness of each other; to keep unbroken the spell of an emotion, the joy of which could never be attained by its earthly counterpart.

WITH a groan Bouchard thrust her from him abruptly.

"This is madness!"

She clung to him, her arms about his neck."

"No, no!" he said brokenly. "You love me—ah, you would do better to hate me, my Fernande, for I am going to leave you."

"Henri!"

"Forgive me, if you can," he said, "that is all I dare ask you to do; forgive me. I have no right, no right to love you, Fernande."

He released her arms from his neck, then rushed from the room like a madman.

"My hat and coat," he ordered Julie who stared at him in consternation, "and go to Madame."

Julie found her mistress sitting up in bed staring at the door.

"Madame!"

"Ah, Julie," said Fernande in a strange voice, "it is finished. Never again shall I play at love."

"You love Monsieur?"

"Love him, oh *bon dieu, bon dieu,* love him?"

She fell back and covered her face with her hands.

"Tiens!" said Julie, nodding her head. "Madame! He will come back. Take my word for it."

"Never. He will never come back. He is a man of such honor. He has a faithful wife, Julie. I have no right to take him from her. Oh, I was wrong. I did not know how much I could love him—and all at once."

"He is married?" asked Julie. "If that is all, be tranquil. I who speak know. To be faithful is not always to love, and the gentleman has just found out. Wait!"

Bouchard found himself in the street walking, and beside him, keeping him grisly company, his conscience.

A clock struck eight. As the last strokes died away he raised a haggard face to look at the illuminated clock face.

"The theatre!"

His sense of duty came to his rescue at once. He had to attend a dress rehearsal that night.

He hailed a taxicab.

When he leaped out in front of the theatre it was dark. A placard was posted up at the door. It read—"Postponed till the 13th." He stared at the sign, stunned.

Another taxi drove up, and a short bearded man skipped nimbly to the pavement, saw the sign and broke into imprecations.

"You too, Bouchard," he said noticing the other. "I did not get the notice of the postponement. The devil take these managers. Here's a mess. What are you doing tonight?"

"Nothing!" Bouchard replied in a hollow voice.

He could not bear to return to Marthe just yet. He must allow himself time to readjust his life.

"You seem depressed. You need cheering. Here, come along with me. We'll have a drink and watch the dancers."

As in a dream, Bouchard suffered himself to be dragged into the

garish Dancing Palace, next door to the theatre, and seated himself at a table.

"I drop in here quite often," said Vervier of the *Matin*. "Queer people. You see all sides of life here. *Garçon*, two brandies. Ever been here before, Bouchard?"

"No!" said Bouchard dully. "No!"

"Too bad. I never come here but I don't get a story. I talk with the waiters. *Bigre!* If you want to get stories, be friendly with waiters and policemen. Cynics, all of them, they see life as it is. Drink your brandy, my dear fellow. There, that is better.

"Now you can laugh at the most pitiable of comedies. There is Madame Perlin, the widow of the financier, ugly as sin, rich as Croesus, and stingy. She sits there every night, looking for the young man who will carry her off to a Messalina debauch, but he never has come. What hope she must have!

"And on the other hand, the young rascal with the sleek hair is kept in luxury by the good-looking woman he is dancing with. Quite an affair; it has been going on for years. She must have charm or money, I don't know which. Too cold-looking for my taste.

"They say she has an obliging husband somewhere, but she keeps quiet about him. I shouldn't wonder, perhaps, if the poor fool thought her the most faithful of wives.

"See there, just beyond the pillar, in the red dress. She only comes one night in the week and stays till about eleven. They have a joke, they call her 'Madame Monday.'"

Bouchard raised his eyes carelessly. Would this man never cease his prattle?

His heart stood still. He had recognized 'Madame Monday.' The day, the hours when he was on duty at the theatres. Marthe!

"You are ill, Bouchard!"

"The heat!" stammered Bouchard. "You will excuse me."

He shook Vervier's hand and hastened to the door.

"A taxi!" he said in a trembling voice. What if he were too late?

The runner darted out.

"Here, Monsieur. Thank you!"

Bouchard sprang in and hoarsely gave the chauffeur the address.

"Boulevard Edgar-Quintet—number 27."

At that moment it was the only address he could remember.

Any magazine can fall in line. But it is the unusual plus the attractive that pays. For instance——

"STILL WITHIN THE LAW"
by BAYARD VEILLER
Author of "Within the Law," "The Thirteenth Chair," etc.

and

"The Most Mysterious Happening in My Life"
by CHANNING POLLOCK
Author of "The Fool," "The Enemy," etc.

BOTH IN OUR NEXT ISSUE—OUT JUNE 1

The Mate of the Glove

By CHARLTON LAWRENCE EDHOLM

HE was one of those unusual men who have no interest in women. As a painter he made use of them just as he used pigments and canvas.

They were decorative objects to fill a given space with flowing line and agreeable color, and his portraits proved that he was not unaware of their charm or their artistic value; but aside from that . . .

WE were gossiping, aimlessly, shamelessly gossiping, Greenberg, Harrison and I, in a quiet corner of the reading-room of the Color Box Club when I first saw Gregory Murdoch. I was a new member. Harrison had just returned from a long trip on the other side.

Greenberg, an entertaining chap with the habit of audacious mental flights, so often found in the finer types of his race, had just related an anecdote of the ateliers that aroused unholy mirth.

Harrison, especially, was amused and laughed so uproariously that a waiter came hurrying in with a scared face. Thought the outbreak was something unpleasant.

The sight of his protruding eyes and rabbit face set us off harder than ever; and meanwhile Greenberg sat back gazing at us through his moon-shaped glasses with the puzzled look on those smooth-shaven, plump features that always puts his stories across.

And at that moment I became aware that the hanging of the doorway at the far end of the room had been drawn aside. I had the impression of a gaunt, haggard figure standing there framed in darkness; a tall, pale figure in carelessly fitting gray clothes, the thin face appearing painfully white by contrast with the disordered black hair.

And then the portiere, held in a long, nervous hand, dropped, and he was gone.

"That was Gregory Murdoch," remarked Greenberg softly. His expression was no longer that of the teller of merry tales. It was grave, thoughtful, troubled.

SO that was Gregory Murdoch, *the* Murdoch; one of the few painters whose work had made me want to meet him. I was not so sure of that now.

For, in the instant that the man had looked—not at us, but straight through us with those singularly luminous eyes, bluish or gray, and fringed with lashes as black as mourning bands, our laughter had ceased. Not subsided, but ceased abruptly.

It was as if a cold hand had been laid on our lips, as if the earth had gently sagged beneath us.

George Harrison was the first to recover. He is a florid-faced chap, unimaginative, sturdy, sudden of temper.

"What the devil!" exclaimed George Harrison. "I'll teach that fellow!"

He half rose from his easy-chair, pulling himself from its depths by the cushioned arms:

"Glaring at us like that!"

I pulled him back. Greenberg did not move. He said quietly:

"The man didn't even see you."

"Nonsense!"

But Harrison had subsided, puffing and muttering, into his seat.

"Didn't see me indeed! Stared at me like a death head!"

Then with a plaintive note in his indignation:

"Say, what's the big idea? Isn't a man supposed to laugh above a whisper in this—this—mausoleum?"

"By all means," replied Greenberg with suavity. "Laugh as much as you like."

But somehow we didn't feel like laughing. Greenberg showed no further disposition to entertain us, and George Harrison, after a blank couple of minutes, shot out his wrist watch viciously and announced that he must be going.

He strode away like a man with a grievance, or like a man who realizes that something has happened that he is not in on.

I suppose that a deaf man feels that way when the jokes are crackling about his unresponsive ears and people are laughing all around him.

Greenberg and I were left alone in the half light, staring at the siphons and ash trays, and thinking our own thoughts.

"So, at last, I have seen Gregory Murdoch," I remarked half to myself.

"That's Murdoch," replied Greenberg briefly.

I wanted to ask a lot of things, but for some reason I hesitated.

I wanted to ask: "Did he always look like that? Is he like other men when you get to know him? Does he always have that appearance of a lost soul? Why does he wear that expression of one who searches for something that he knows is lost forever?" And—oh, a lot of questions.

I was just one big question-mark. For Gregory Murdoch had in his personality all the mysterious quality that he puts into his paintings. Few painters are that way. Most successful artists look normal and satisfied with life.

But all I could bring myself to utter was something rather banal:

"Let me see, isn't this Murdoch the chap who had some sort of a row over a picture? Painted the portrait of a man's wife and then refused to give it up? I don't think it got into the papers, but it seems to me I heard some gossip of that sort. Is that the man?"

"That's the man," said Greenberg.

There was no trace of the raconteur about him now. There was a sincerity back of his plump mask that I had never seen before.

Greenberg son of a rich silk manufacturer, dabbler in art and music, relater of droll stories, was a totally different person from the man who abruptly leaned forward; who rested one arm on the table and looked at me with those dark, full, heavy-lidded eyes in which, for the first time, I saw the mysticism that lurks in every member of his race.

"Listen," he said. "There is something more to it than gossip."

He broke off abruptly and smiled with a droop to his lips.

"It is just as well our friend Harrison left us in a huff. I don't think I would dare risk it if Harrison were in the room. His feet are rooted in

the clay, while you have wings on your heels.

"You are capable of understanding Murdoch, more or less; that is, I mean, you can see something in his pictures and you admire the man and respect him for the work he has done. You know he is not a fool."

"I know he's a genius!" I exclaimed.

"I recognize the distinction," observed Greenberg. "Very well, then, I can tell you the ins and outs of that scandal about the portrait. In the first place you must understand that it is all nonsense when they say that Murdoch demanded some ridiculous price for the picture.

"I assure you that money had nothing whatever to do with it. He refused to name a price. Why, the husband, or perhaps I should say the widower, would have paid any price for it, any price whatever.

"You know he is very wealthy; inherited a fortune and made an ungodly sum in munition stocks and is willing to pay, without the slightest hesitation, for anything that he wants. Hayward is his name. You've heard of him?"

"Heard of him? Who hasn't heard of Spencer Hayward! 'Spender' Hayward they call him on Broadway, and that title in New York comes higher than a peerage."

"Of course. Well, here's how it worked out: After justly earning that title, 'Spender' Hayward took a notion to settle down and be good. Oh, it was quite a modern idyll.

"It seems he was motoring in Rhode Island somewhere, got off the main road from Narragansett, followed a by-way between cemeteries and abandoned farms, and lost himself in one of those sleepy little villages that seemed to have been forgotten by the Twentieth Century.

"There he met a girl, a *real* girl, you know; and it rather knocked the breath out of him, because for years and years he had never met anything but those queer artificial little creatures that try to live up to the queer little names that they go by on Broadway.

"IT must have been like a drink from the old oaken bucket when he first saw Una Farrell. It had never occurred to him that anything so simple and natural could be so desirable; and Hayward's enthusiasm must have convinced the girl that he was wonderful.

"At any rate, they were married within a month after he met her, raking the meadows sweet with hay, no doubt, in true Maud Muller fashion.

"Una (did I say that was her name?), she was the daughter of an Irishman, a farmer with a few unprofitable acres. Her mother was an English woman of the fair-haired type with eyes of blue—you know, the eyes of blue that always rhyme with "hearts so true" in old ballads.

"The girl herself with her fairy figure and shy ways made you think she had stepped right out of the period of the spreading white skirt with many flounces; the period when ladies wore their hair in ringlets and bound their little round-toed sandals with ribbons crossed above the instep.

"Of course she could not have been wearing such an unusual costume when our friend from Broadway spied her. More likely it was gingham and a sunbonnet. But after he had installed her in his home on Riverside Drive, I understand that she made something of a fad of reviving the mid-Victorian costumes.

Possibly the invasion of the crinoline with which we were threatened not so very long ago was due in part to Mrs. Spencer Hayward's influence on the mode; for with her charm

and his lavish millions, she soon acquired a following.

"It must have been a queer *ménage*. 'Spender' Hayward, with his gorgeous ties and dazzling waistcoats, his complete set of jewelry, from scarf pin to watch chain, for every day in the year; in short, his lobster-palace personality, trying to find something in common with this shy and fragile child; shrinking, yet with a pride of her own, like some fairy queen who suddenly discovers herself on a drawing-room table, chattered over by a lot of parvenue dames.

"For a time he was all consideration for her, proud as Punch at his ownership of this dainty little creature, who attracted so much attention.

"As a matter of course, he gave her everything that money could buy. Money was the easiest thing in the world for 'Spender' Hayward. It flowed through him as water through a millrace.

"At first he also tried to give her the things that money could not buy. And perhaps for a brief period she may have been led to believe that she had married a real man and not merely a piece of furniture of the type known as 'overstuffed.'

"But her self-deception could not have lasted long. Hayward had power of a sort, a primitive masculine personality and the power that money gives its owner. Aside from that he was not much of a man. Do you know what I mean?

"He lacked the elements of manhood that Murdoch, for instance, has in such abundance—sensitiveness to spiritual beauty, the desire and ability to create.

"A chap like Hayward would think that was something effeminate in a man, but it's not. Women know better, and certainly women *should* know what constitutes complete manhood.

"When Hayward once more began to drift toward the after-midnight clubs and the race tracks and the artificial delights of Broadway, Una did not even try to keep step with him.

"A totally new world had been opened to her meanwhile; things that seem commonplace to most of us, so that we say offhand, 'books, music, pictures,' instead of inclining our heads reverently at the words that connote the divinity of Art.

"I happened to see her once with her face quite hidden between her flower-like, sensitive hands as she listened to a Ballade; Opus 23 in E Minor it was. Valdez was playing. You know, that little Spanish pianist who carries himself like an emperor.

"And the quaint part of it was that Una had allowed herself to be overcome by the wizardry of Chopin and Valdez at an afternoon affair at her own house. Most ridiculous thing for a hostess to do, wasn't it?

"What made the incident absolutely unforgettable is this: before the sounding-board had ceased to vibrate, and while even that superficial gathering sat there, a bit breathless, 'Spender' Hayward in the rôle of Master of the House walks over to the piano and claps Valdez smartly on the back, a genial clap that echoed through the drawing-room and he said cordially, 'Fine work, my boy! That's the stuff!'

"No, it wasn't because he had sent a check to Valdez's manager for five thousand dollars. It wasn't a case of putting on dog, at all. He was simply trying to be nice to the little pianist. That was his way. But Valdez got up, livid with fury, and walked out of the house.

"AFTER that incident Hayward and his wife went their separate ways

and made no pretense of appearing together in public.

"That was just about a month before the *Rose Mary* was lost. You must have heard most of the story of the *Rose Mary*, the yacht that Hayward fitted up with all the gorgeousness of Cleopatra's barge. It was an exquisite thing in spite of his barbaric taste; lines as graceful as a seagull in flight.

"And I suppose you remember seeing something in the papers (though it was quite some time ago that it happened) about the yacht being missing for weeks and weeks and then finally turning up near Porto Rico, floating like a swan on the calm waters—and not a soul on board. She was towed into San Juan Harbor, and to this day no explanation of that mystery has appeared.

"Not a soul ever came back: not one of the crew and not one of the party; neither Una, nor any of her four guests.

"It was supposed by some that they had all been swept overboard by a storm, though the vessel showed no signs of it. Some people hazarded a guess that the yacht had been raided by a hypothetical Twentieth Century buccaneer; others surmised that all on board might have landed on some unfrequented bit of an island and that the yacht had broken her moorings and had left them marooned.

"Oh, there were all kinds of wild guesses, and Hayward spent a mint of money in trying to find some trace of his wife and her friends, but nothing was found, absolutely nothing.

"And, strangely enough, the *Rose Mary* was lost, when a fresh crew attempted to bring her back to New York. A tropical storm sank the little vessel; but this time the crew were picked up by a fruit steamer.

"'Spender' Hayward was hard hit. You must know that he has a big, warm heart; boisterous and affectionate as a Newfoundland puppy.

"For months he went cruising about directing the search for his wife, or her body, or even some word of her fate. Huge rewards were offered. Every bit of waterside gossip was followed up, but nothing definite could be found. Nothing.

"When he got back from the long cruise, Hayward did not look like the same man. His clothes hung upon him, his puffy cheeks had grown thin and all the buoyancy had gone out of his step. Altogether he was a pitiful object, as primitive in his grief as he had been in his pursuit of pleasure.

"He took no interest in the old joys, food and drink and things. He wore the most elaborate mourning bands on his hat and sleeve and his principal business after reaching New York was to arrange for a monument of gigantic proportions to 'the only woman who ever mattered,' as he put it.

"It is rather overwhelming to think of a mighty obelisk being erected in the memory of poor little Una, but it was, or at least it was being set up the last time I heard of the matter. Perhaps the masons are still at work. It was of presidential proportions.

"That was not all. The poor fellow used to go around to his friends and reproach himself bitterly for being the cause of her death— How, if he had not been 'such an unfaithful brute, she would not have gone on that fatal voyage; how he 'never appreciated her until she was lost' and all that sort of thing. He wept copiously just as he formerly drank.

"ONE day in a Fifth Avenue window he saw a portrait by Gregory Murdoch, a sumptuous thing in his earlier manner, and nothing would

do but that the bereaved husband must go to the artist with a photograph under his arm to order a portrait, exactly as if Murdoch were a fabricator of life-size crayons, colored by hand.

"Murdoch told me about that interview, and it must have been rather fascinating to see the two men together; the painter, ascetic, reserved, as far removed from Hayward's world as if he were living in Mars, and the unhappy millionaire, wiping his eyes with a silk handkerchief bordered with an inch of black, and uttering these remarkable words:

"'Mr. Murdoch, I want an enlarged oil painting of my poor, dear little wife. I don't care what it costs. Do it right and you wont lose by it!'

"I don't think it was the tears that interested Murdoch and finally induced him to accept the commission. Murdoch is that way. The obvious does not make any impression on him, and the warm and salty flood would not move him any more than would Hayward's dollars.

"But something in the girl's personality got him. The photograph had reflected some of it (just a hint, you know) and the photograph had been thrust under the painter's nose so that he could not very well help but see it.

"The outcome of it was that Murdoch accepted the commission: sent for every photograph of the girl that could be found and had a trunkful of her clothes and personal effects delivered to his studio.

"He even demanded some of her letters and knicknacks, and found out what kind of music she liked, and ascertained that she had been partial to a very faint perfume of lilacs that made you wonder whether you had dreamed of lilacs when you were in her presence.

"And with all those preparations he began his last picture.

"For the figure, he secured a model, a frail, slender type as like as possible to Una; one who wore without adjustment the dainty gowns of the dead woman.

"He placed her in a stiff-back, Spanish chair set in a corner of the studio where the light was subdued, and he patiently endeavored to transfer to this girl some of his impression of what manner of woman Una had been.

"Thorough-going, wasn't it? An artist trying to absorb the personality of a girl whom he had never met, absorbing it through her photographs, her books, her letters, her dresses and jewelry, and then trying to infuse that spirit into the human lay-figure before him.

"In spite of all that, the picture was not a success. Spencer Hayward viewed it at the end of a month, and again two weeks later and he said it wouldn't do.

"Later, as you know, he would have been willing to pay any sum for the painting and wanted to drag the matter into court in order to make good his claim, although no money had passed between the men.

"But on his second visit to the studio, before the final touches, he found fault with the expression. 'It was too cool,' he said. 'Too touch-me-not.'

"It was the way Una had looked at him in the latter part of their married life, but (as he tried to explain to the artist) he wanted the picture to look like the Una whom he had first taken in his arms. He said he would call again."

GREENBERG paused for a few minutes while he leaned back in his chair and stared thoughtfully upward into the dusk. Then he began again slowly:

"What happened next made such an impression on me, just from hear-

ing Murdoch tell of it, that I sometimes feel that I must have been right there when it took place. In a sense I shared the experience for, as he told me about it, I could see every move, hear every sound. Yes, I shared it with all my senses.

"Gregory Murdoch stood for a long time staring at the portrait after Hayward had gone. Hayward was right, there *was* something lacking. Though the lines were graceful and harmonious and the color had a subdued glow, a charm of its own that was not surpassed in any of his other work, yet the picture left one cold.

"It was just as Hayward had said, the expression of that lovely face had no more of the feeling of life than the photographs. The portrait was not much more than a composite photograph, much better arranged, of course, and with the added beauty of color, but that was all.

"The painter slowly walked back and forth with his hands clasped behind him, looking now at the photographs of the girl that were scattered on the table and now at the painting.

"Then he glanced aimlessly out of the window where the treetops of Washington Square were just beginning to show faint touches of green and bronze. The voices of children playing in the Square came up to him like voices heard in a dream.

"Suddenly, following an unreasoned impulse, he took up his palette, selected a brush, and made a tentative stroke or two about the mouth. It seemed to help. He stood back and surveyed his work critically. Yes, there was a difference, a certain tremulous expression had come about the lips, but the eyes still remained cool and placid.

"He selected another brush and added the slightest shadow under the eyes. It was coming on. He was beginning to feel that the girl's eyes would grow humid; that the pupils would seem larger; that there would come into them a certain look not to be defined, but never to be forgotten, as she gazed upon the man whom she loved.

"Presently he was painting with a feverish concentration, an intensity that he had not felt at any time before while working on this picture. He had that miraculous sense that he was laboring with something alive, as if flesh itself were taking shape under his fingers.

"He almost felt as if Una were there before him; as if the girl whom he had never seen were an old and dear friend who had come into his studio for a chat and a cup of tea.

"It was as if he had said, 'Una dear, hold that pose for a while. I've *got* to sketch you that way.'

"And as he walked backward from his picture, studying it at a distance, holding his brush with a nervous grip as a fencer holds the foil, his glance went past the easel to the high-backed Spanish chair in the corner of the studio, and without surprise, he saw that Una was sitting in it.

"The light had begun to fail, but still there was enough. Murdoch was working now with swift, certain strokes that seemed to put blood into the flesh he was creating. How exquisite was the droop at the corners of her mouth! It suggested sadness and yet there was a hint of a smile there, too.

"And her eyes! So tender and yet so tragic! They seemed to tell of love's never-satisfied yearning. They seemed to express love's fulfillment and peace.

"How easy it was for him to put all that in his picture now that she was before him. He searched on the table for a tube of color and impatiently swept to the floor the whole assortment of scattered photographs.

What did they matter? He had no use for photographs now.

"The atmosphere enveloping the figure seated in that corner of the studio was wonderful. There was a grayish light as if pearls had been crushed and the impalpable dust were floating in the air.

"That shimmering white of her dress of flounced muslin, and the contrast of the black lace scarf draped about her shoulders! It was a miracle to harmonize the tones and yet he did it without an effort.

"And her hands! Slender and fragile as Easter lilies they lay carelessly clasped in her lap, the left hand showing the faint touch of gold where the two bands encircled the ring finger, and the right lightly holding a thin gray glove.

"IT was singular that Una had fallen into the exact pose of the painting as he had composed it, and the detail of her costume was the same, even the single glove.

"Yet as Gregory Murdoch laid on a stroke here and touched lightly with his brush there, the whole picture seemed transformed into something vibrant. It was as if he had touched a girl who was lying asleep so that she should awaken. It was as though he had breathed life into one who was dead.

"But the light was almost gone. The painter had worked desperately against time. Suddenly he felt faint; the strength had gone out of him.

"With a sigh he dropped the palette and the brushes on the table, still looking into those eyes which seemed to be saying the saddest word that lovers know.

"Suddenly a terrible fear seized him, and, staggering, he ran to the corner where the old Spanish chair stood and threw himself on his knees before it, burying his head in her lap, feverishly gripping her hands. He felt their soft response; he felt the contact of the filmy muslin against his cheek and a yielding body beneath it.

"He could sense in his nostrils the dim odor of lilacs, and he sobbed, 'Una, Una! Mine!' He felt as if his heart were bursting. He could scarcely breathe. He could hardly speak her name. 'Una, don't go!'

"There was no answer. Gradually the little hands were disengaged from his and he felt them slowly smoothing his hair, stroking his head gently, once, twice. And then—then he knew that she was gone.

"He was gripping the arms of the old Spanish chair and his forehead was pressed hard against the tarnished leather cushion. He groaned and dragged himself to his feet. Rubbing his eyes, he stared about him. There was no sign of her, no trace. She was gone.

"Only on the frayed leather cushion of the chair was the soft little gray glove, which he is sure had not been there before. He snatched it up and pressed it to his lips, to his cheeks and to his forehead. It seemed to him that it was warm and had the faintest odor of lilacs."

Greenberg stopped speaking. There was a long pause. I was not sure whether he was through.

"Is that all?" I said.

"Yes, that is all," replied Greenberg, "except that the little gray glove is always with him, night and day. It was warm, he said, when he found it and it has never since grown cold. I am one of the two men who have seen it."

"And have you seen the picture, too? Is it as wonderful as all that?"

"Yes," answered Greenberg quietly. "The picture is a miracle, a miracle of art—and of love."

"Strange things," I said, "these

hallucinations. The more gifted a man is, the nearer he is to the borderland of insanity. I suppose the poor fellow is absolutely convinced that all this happened. It's pathetic. I suppose he considers the stray glove as positive proof. Of course it doesn't prove anything at all."

"Of course not," said Greenberg. "But it's singular, just the same. You know my father's in the silk business. I was something of a judge of silks before I began fooling with paint. In short, I *know* silk."

He paused to tap and light a cigarette.

"So it was interesting to me to observe that this little gray glove is not like any other piece of silk I know of. I studied it carefully, the color, the thread, the texture.

"You have heard of those wonderful fabrics of the Orient, so delicate that yards and yards of them could be passed through a girl's ring? Well, this glove was so filmy light as to make that weave seem like burlap.

"And the color! I could not tell whether it was dyed or the natural shade, but the luster of it was as if one had woven moonbeams with the light of opals. Both in color and texture it was so delicate that as I held it in my hand I almost expected to see it vanish like a wreath of smoke.

"As you say, it proves nothing, that glove. All I know is: the mate of that glove is not on earth."

The Deadly Basilisk

Old-time wayfarers went provided with a live cock, a mirror, and if they could get hold of one, a nimble weasel.

Armed with these strange weapons they were secure against the deadly basilisk. This creature was small, but its venom was redoubtable.

A species of lizard, with the head and comb of a cock, it had a serpent tail, and was hatched in some mysterious way by a serpent from an aged cock's egg.

By its poisonous breath it destroyed all living matter and so infected water that a drop was death to man and beast. Any bird which flew above it fluttered dead to the ground; attacked by a mounted spearman, its venom ran up the spear shaft and slew rider and steed.

There were several traditional foes of the monster, the cock and the weasel who vanquished it, the first by crowing, the latter by its overwhelming skunk-like discharge.

The man provided with a mirror, if he was agile enough, confronted the basilisk with its own image, and in some unscientific way, drove back the venom to its producer.

Strangely enough, in one respect the basilisk was a gentleman. It allowed itself to be seized by a woman without harming her or putting up any fight.

No Defense Whatever

By VICTOR LAURISTON

A TWO PART STORY—CONCLUSION

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED

DAWSON REDDICK, prominent lawyer in Mornington, proposes to his colleague, Allan Bressey, until that time an unknown, unsuccessful counselor, that he undertake the defense of one of his clients—Mary Galt, the prettiest girl in Mornington.

She is accused of shooting Samuel B. Crofton, a broker, on Main Street, in sight of a score of witnesses.

Collinson, Reddick's partner, gets together whatever information he can and this is Reddick's brief to Bressey.

At the jail, Mary Galt tells Bressey that Crofton, a trusted friend, who had looked after her mother's affairs since her father's death, had taken $20,000 cash to invest in Megantic Silver, which went into liquidation. Enraged, she went to Crofton's office to learn that he was returning to town that evening. Later, on Main Street, as she saw his car approaching, she waved the chauffeur to stop. She opened the left-hand door—and then she could not remember anything else save that Mr. Crofton was dead and she was holding a revolver when the chauffeur grabbed her hands; therefore she did not deny that she shot Crofton.—She simply did not remember.

Bressey, thereupon, decides on several defenses, namely: suicide, dementia or that the right-hand door of the car was unguarded and someone stepped up to the door and shot Crofton.

At about this time Reddick's desire to give Bressey some publicity causes him to submit an account of the Galt case to the Mornington Star. *This excites Bressey, as Reddick therein divulges his, Bressey's, defense to Prosecutor Kergin.*

CHAPTER VII.

THE PAPER CROFTON LEFT

REDDICK'S discomposure, if so slight a flicker of feeling could be called a discomposure, came and went in a flash.

"Oh, *that*," he rejoined, carelessly. "I'd forgotten, quite. Did Collinson explain to you? Crofton, it seems, had a safe-deposit box at the Commercial Bank.

"It contained some sort of sealed document to be opened only in the presence of Mrs. Galt or her representative. I was letting the matter ride— I knew you had more serious problems on your mind."

But for that brief flicker of perturbation, his careless ease might have deceived Allen Bressey.

"I s'pose," added Reddick, "we may as well see to it in the morning. Yes, 10 o'clock will suit me."

With that he nonchalantly went back to his billiards.

What, wondered Allan Bressey, did that brief tremor of perturbation mean? All he knew was that Collin-

son in that chance conversation had unwittingly disclosed something Reddick had not intended him to disclose.

Bressey dimly recollected that Reddick had on one occasion referred to a retainer that "might conflict" with the Galt defense.

Well, there was nothing to do except leave 10 A. M. and the safe-deposit box at the Commercial Bank to answer the question; and meanwhile to sit up till past midnight studying the still hopeless problem of defense.

"Mossop," decided Bressey at last, "will have to find the way out, if there is one. I can't—and Reddick . . ."

Reddick, he mused, had spoken of "the prettiest face in Mornington." It was a pretty face, all right. He had seen it just three times in as many days in that gloomy jail background. He must have another talk with Mary Galt.

But it was for the jury to sentimentalize over the prettiest face in Mornington. Allan Bressey dare not. Allan Bressey must keep his wits about him, his head cool, his heart hard.

Mentally, he ran over again and again the defense strategy:

First and foremost, by every possible hint, suggestion and innuendo, to prove Crofton a crook.

Get that jury to dislike Crofton—to hate him—to feel he merely got what was coming to him.

Then, use Mary Galt's attractions to appeal to the sympathetic emotions of the jurors.

"I used to hate that," reflected Allan Bressey.

Get across the idea that, even if Mary Galt did fire the shot, it might have been accidental.

"Though it was entirely deliberate and premeditated," he insisted to himself.

"And put her on the stand and make her swear—and stick to it—that she never fired the shot at all."

But then Kergin would cross-question her. Would she stick to her story, or would she crumple, and confess everything?

"If the jury can be made to hate Crofton for what he did, they'll see a doubt where both Kergin and I see positive certainty," Bressey reflected. "But dare I put her in the box?"

That, he decided, he must leave to Mossop.

At 10 A. M. precisely, Allan Bressey called on Manager Williamson of the Commercial Bank. Reddick was, as usual, late. It was, in fact, fifteen minutes later, and only after a hurry-up telephone message from the impatient bank messenger, that Reddick put in a jaunty appearance.

"Well," he demanded, "what are we waiting for? Mr. Bressey represents Mrs. Galt, and I represent the Crofton estate. And here," he added, as a debonair young man sauntered in, "is Mr. Thomas Shedd, mining engineer, to represent himself."

Reddick showed no tremor now—none whatever. While the manager punctiliously identified the safe-deposit box in the big vault and sent a clerk for the bank's key, Reddick drew Bressey to one side.

"I know what's in this," he whispered, "but I thought I'd best keep it quiet till the murder trial was over. Only Collinson, the blundering fool, had to blurt things out."

"What *is* the document?"

"You'll see soon enough?"

"Does he know?" Bressey indicated dapper young Mr. Shedd, daintily stroking his mustache.

"Not a word. It's a joke on him."

Reddick, as he spoke, fitted Crofton's key and the long, flat box was drawn out and placed on a table.

The manager handed Reddick a

long envelope, carefully sealed, with the endorsement:

In the event of my death to be opened by my executor, Dawson Reddick, in the presence of Mrs. Atherly Galt or her representative. S. B. CROFTON

Bressey's nerves were suddenly atingle. The records of Megantic Silver showed inferentially that Crofton had used Mrs. Galt's $20,000 for his own private ends. Would this envelope contain an unequivocal confession of the embezzlement?

REDDICK tore open the envelope, unfolded the document it contained, glanced through it, and handed it to Manager Williamson. The latter, with faintly uplifted eyebrows, passed it on to Allan Bressey.

As he glanced through it, Bressey realized that his main structure of defense had toppled like a house of cards.

"What in God's name is this?" he demanded.

"This," said Reddick coolly, "is a paper I drew at Crofton's request the night before he left for Toronto. He came to me in great perturbation. He was nervous, he said, about traveling on the railroad.

"Mrs. Galt, he explained, had told him to put $20,000 into Megantic Silver. 'I didn't,' he said. 'I meant to save her in spite of herself. But I want to make sure that, if anything happens, she will be protected.'

"I drew this trust deed, practically at his dictation. It gives Mrs. Galt 50,000 shares of Delorme stock, or, in the alternative, $20,000 cash. At this morning's stock market quotations, I'm betting Mrs. Galt takes the stock."

Mr. Thomas Shedd tugged at his fair mustache.

"You're sure the document's regular, and all that?"

Reddick whistled.

"I'm not saying. Indeed, I'm *not* sure. I have some doubts as to its legality. So it might be just as well —for the time being—to say nothing about it. I rely on you, gentlemen."

He pocketed the document. The safe-deposit box was replaced and locked. As they passed out, Reddick edged close to Bressey.

"That, I fancy, will keep things quiet till the trial is over."

He slapped Tom Shedd on the shoulder, so that the debonair young gentleman winced.

"No need to be disconsolate, old chap," he chirruped. "I'll get a good opinion on the legality of the thing."

Bressey spoke:

"When Mossop's here you can submit it to him."

"Mossop! Why——"

Reddick halted.

"Yes, I can consult Mossop," he agreed.

But Allan Bressey missed his flicker of perturbation this time. He was engrossed in a more appalling problem. His defense, after all, had been built largely on Crofton's dishonesty toward Mrs. Galt—and this document in Dawson Reddick's pocket, whatever its legal merits, proved one thing incontrovertibly.

It proved that, at least in his dealings with Mrs. Galt, Samuel B. Crofton had been an honest man. He had not merely protected her $20,000; he had, perhaps without realizing it, handed her more than five times that sum.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RIGHT-HAND DOOR

ON Saturday, April 24th—three days before the spring assizes were to open—Allan Bressey called upon Prosecutor Kergin.

This Kergin was a hard-faced, granite-souled old lawyer whose most nearly redeeming trait was a

certain clear-cut ideal of ineluctable justice. As prosecutor he was merciless where he saw criminality and he saw criminality almost everywhere.

As a judge, he would have been rigidly just in conducting a trial, but Draconian in inflicting punishment. His twin hates were sob-sisters and sentimental newspaper writers.

From behind his gold-rimmed glasses he shot a glance that made Bressey realize his youth, his inexperience, his callowness.

"When do you expect to reach the Galt case, Mr. Kergin?" asked Bressey deferentially.

"Quickly as we can," snapped Kergin.

This was decidedly inexact. But Kergin, questioned further, explained that court would open at 1 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon. The grand jury must bring in true bills before the criminal cases could proceed.

"You're second on the docket," said Kergin. "The first case, though, wont take long. We'll have the Galt jury sworn in by 11 o'clock, Wednesday."

That, mused Bressey, meant a respite exceedingly slight.

Kergin gave him another hard look.

"Now, boy," he said, in a tone meant to be kindly but which was almost ferocious, "take a hint from me. Don't try to pull any fool stunts. Justice Stringman wont stand for them. Conduct your case with dignity, keep your temper, and don't exasperate the judge.

"You can't save that girl, you know; but you can win a lot of credit if you conduct a decent case and stick to the evidence. As for these fine-spun theories you've been airing in the *Star*—lay off that stuff. I have you stopped."

In a fresh accession of rough kindliness he slapped Bressey on the back, a slap that jarred every bone and muscle in his frame.

After some meditation on Dawson Reddick's warning, Bressey, on Monday, wired E. Mossop, K. C. at Toronto:

> In accordance arrangement made with you by Dawson Reddick expect you to handle counsel work Galt murder case opens here April 28th.

Then he put the finishing touches on his carefully-prepared briefs. In arrangement, convenience and fullness of material, they must, he felt, favorably impress the veteran King's Counsel.

HE was still on this work late on Monday night when a telephone call came from Dawson Reddick.

"I want to see you, Allan. It's important—very. Yes, in a way it concerns the Galt case. Meet me at Tom Shedd's office in ten minutes."

Tom Shedd's office had, two short months earlier, been the office of S. B. Crofton & Company. The old firm name still on the windows was surmounted now by the added legend, "Estate Of." But the dominant force within was dapper Tom Shedd.

Shedd, lounging in a swivel chair, looked anything but a force—a lazily good-looking young man with pale blue eyes and a drooping light mustache.

He did not get up as Bressey entered. Dawson Reddick did. The habitual indolence of the one contrasted with the brisk energy of the other.

Reddick handed Bressey a chair and passed his cigarette case.

"Shedd," he explained, "has something to tell you. Then I'll talk a bit. Shedd comes first. But even before Shedd comes a clear, definite understanding. Our talk is, em-

phatically, to go no further. It's not to be used in any way. You understand that, Allan?"

"And if I refuse——"

"We don't talk. That's all."

"Very well," agreed Bressey reluctantly, and Reddick nodded to Shedd.

Shedd for a moment looked as though saying anything were far too much exertion for him.

"Oh," he at last drawled, "it's about Uncle Crofton and this crackbrained bequest or whatever you call it."

"Trust deed," interpolated Reddick.

"Ah—yes. I—ah—thought a lot of Uncle Crofton, else I wouldn't have put in a pile of hard work in this infernal office with him, all the time getting more and more—ah—*dotty*."

Shedd gently tapped his forehead, and stared at the ceiling.

Allan Bressey listened with growing impatience.

Right now, with court opening tomorrow; with the murder trial coming the next day; with Mossop due on tomorrow night's train; with much still to do and horribly more left undone because the doing was impossible—it was exasperating to be dragged into an inconsequential discussion of that trust deed to Mrs. Galt.

They had agreed to "let it ride" till after the trial. Why not do so?

He ventured that suggestion.

"But—aw," drawled Shedd, "let me explain, wont you? Maybe you'll find it comes closer to your precious client than you—ah—suppose. Now, about Uncle Crofton——"

And he lazily drifted into an elaborate effort to prove that Samuel B. Crofton, for years past, had been growing more and more *dotty*.

"In some things—aw—keen as ever, you know; in most things. And yet, he had funny little mental quirks, and they kept getting worse and worse.

"Just—aw—take his craze for red. He insisted on red wall tints for his apartment—horrible color!—red rugs, red curtains. Wore a red tie, and—aw—a red carnation in his buttonhole. Paid a fortune for a landaulet and another fortune to have it done over in red—red body, red mohair upholstery, red curtains.

"See here"—Shedd's nervous fingers caught a tangle of red elastic bands from a desk tray—"I'd rather any day have brown elastics. Almost every office in Mornington uses brown elastics.

"But would Uncle Crofton use a brown elastic? He must have red, and nothing but red. If the bookstore hasn't got them, the bookstore has to order them for him.

"Why," concluded Shedd, with a burst of exasperation, "he took on Dawson Reddick as his solicitor and made him his executor just on account of his name.

"You don't believe me? Well, ask Reddick, here. Uncle Crofton was loony about red; and when a man gets so superstitious as all that, he's —aw—volplaning toward the insane asylum."

To Allan Bressey, his mind fixed on the Galt brief, Mossop, the court tomorrow, the trial day after tomorrow, all this chatter of debonair Thomas Shedd regarding Samuel B. Crofton's idiosyncrasies was puerile. He got up, impatiently; yet, reluctant to leave, paced up and down.

Shedd twitched nervously.

"For God's sake, quit that!" he exclaimed.

"What?"

"That prowling up and down. It —aw—gets on my nerves."

ALLAN Bressey sat down.

"You mean," he challenged, "you're going to attack that trust deed?"

"It can't stand. Uncle Crofton, I say, was *dotty*. Then, too, there was no—aw—valuable consideration."

Bressey meditated just how far he dared show his hand.

"Is it true that Mrs. Galt gave your uncle $20,000 to invest?"

"Pardon me," said Shedd.

With the hint of controversy the drawl vanished. He grew suddenly keen.

"Mrs. Galt bought — actually bought—25,000 shares of Megantic Silver for $20,000. She instructed Uncle Crofton to put the deal through. Uncle Crofton diddled around, hemmed and hawed, put her off—why? Because, he told her he had doubts about Megantic."

"Actually," flashed Bressey, "because he was using the money under circumstances where, even without the trust deed, a court would almost certainly imply that Mr. Crofton invested the $20,000 in Delorme, in trust for Mrs. Galt."

Shedd smiled.

"Even a court would hardly claim that Uncle Crofton was that altruistic—to buy Delorme for Mrs. Galt on the eve of a spectacular rise. No—he'd be likelier to sell to her on the eve of a spectacular drop. Eh, Reddick?"

Reddick nodded.

"The idea I got," he interposed, "was that Mr. Crofton wanted this trust deed to protect Mrs. Galt till he could make permanent arrangements to invest her money. In strict law, I doubt if the document is worth the paper it's written on."

"You drew it yourself," challenged Bressey.

"That," retorted Reddick, "is why I feel so sure."

Bressey stared.

"Let me see that trust deed," he invited.

He closely perused it; then with a short laugh handed it back to Reddick.

"*I*," said Reddick, slowly, "can't be made to tell what Crofton said or how he acted when he got me to draw up that paper. But there's nothing to prevent me telling, and"—he regarded Bressey keenly—"I don't have to tell in court, and neither does Shedd have to tell, that Crofton had been acting queerly and talking strangely. Kergin wont question along that line. And you—you're pledged not to. But——"

Allan Bressey caught the implication.

"You mean—suicide?"

Reddick shrugged his shoulders.

"If," he went on, "this trust deed is attacked by Mr. Shedd, there's no one except Mrs. Galt to uphold it. If Mrs. Galt does not defend it . . ."

"It just occurs to me," lazily interpolated Shedd, "the same sort of evidence that upsets the trust deed establishes a—aw—pretty strong presumption of suicide."

In the ensuing silence, Bressey once more paced the office, regardless even of Shedd's nervousness.

"By the way," said Reddick, "I have a line on that witness Kergin wants."

"Eh?" exclaimed Bressey.

"A witness who was watching the right-hand door of the red landaulet from the time it turned into Main Street till Pete Lane jumped down and grabbed the revolver."

Silence again. At last Bressey found faltering voice.

"Well?"

"The missing link," added Reddick, "in Kergin's chain."

THE ensuing silence grew heavy. Shedd twiddled his thumbs. Bressey stared at them, his face grown

suddenly white; and then a flush swept away the pallor—a flush of mingled shame and anger.

He knew, or thought he knew, what lay behind Reddick's words.

"But even if that right-hand door did remain shut," said Tom Shedd, in his soft drawl, "the suicide theory——"

"Might still hold," agreed Reddick. "But if Crofton was *non compos mentis*—crazy enough to shoot himself—he was hardly sane enough to execute a valid trust deed."

"Yet if the trust deed went into court?" suggested Shedd.

Silence again.

"The trust deed," said Reddick, at last, "need never go into court if, say, Mrs. Galt executed a waiver of her rights, her supposititious rights——"

Bressey got to his feet, his eyes ablaze.

"What you're trying to hint to me is that if Mrs. Galt executes a waiver of her rights under that trust deed, you'll suppress this one mysterious witness Kergin hadn't found and still needs; and you'll give evidence to pretty well prove that Crofton might have committed suicide——"

"And Kergin," said Reddick, with cool effrontery, "has, as yet, no evidence that Crofton *wasn't* a crook. And there's your case, Allan, in a nutshell—antagonism to Crofton for his crookedness; a jury convinced that he deserved what he got and eager to find some element of doubt; the strong possibility of self destruction; Miss Galt's positive denial that she fired the shot; and the feminine appeal of the prettiest face in Morningtон.

"And when you've won, Allan—a big reputation, the biggest fee you care to ask, and—I'm betting on it—the lovely prisoner herself, glad to escape with a life sentence."

Reddick knew from the young lawyer's flush that his last shot, more than any other, had struck home. He tossed a paper on the desk in front of Allan Bressey.

"What's this?"

"That waiver, for Mrs. Galt to execute."

"Mrs. Galt," Bressey hesitated, "I—I can't ask her to sign that." Threats bubbled within him—prison—disbarment for Dawson Reddick—exposure—and next moment he remembered the utter futility of such threats.

"Suppose I go ahead, and Mossop——"

"Mossop?"

Reddick's peculiar tone halted Allan Bressey. He stared at his fellow lawyer. Shedd watched them both with a softly understanding smile.

"Mossop!" repeated Reddick.

He laughed, shortly.

"Some people, Allan, never learn to swim till they're flung head-first into deep water. They swim then because they've got to. I could have advised you to do your own counsel work . . . but I couldn't have nerved you to do it. Well——"

"What do you mean?" gasped Bressey.

Only now did he realize how tremendously he had come to rely on the experienced help of the great cross-examiner for the actual handling of his defense in court.

"Why, you told me you'd spoken to Mossop; you had him tied up——"

"I said he was tied up."

Reddick's cool effrontery did not desert him.

"So he is—with a case before the Privy Council. He sailed for England yesterday. He never even heard of your case, and doesn't know of your existence, or Mary Galt's . . . Now, what about this waiver?"

Bressey's eyes were ablaze; his

fingers twitched. He took a threatening step toward Dawson Reddick; next moment he turned, glowering uncertainly on debonair Thomas Shedd.

"You—you——"

And then, suddenly calm, he snatched the waiver from the desk, tore it into pieces, and flung the fragments into Shedd's red-varnished waste basket.

"That's part of my answer. The rest you'll get in the courtroom."

CHAPTER IX

THE TRIAL OPENS

AT one o'clock on Tuesday, Mr. Justice Stringham opened court. The opening formalities were concluded when Dawson Reddick strolled nonchalantly inside the bar. Seating himself at the long table reserved for counsel, he leaned toward Allan Bressey.

"So," he whispered, "you've been trying to get some Mornington lawyer to take your counsel work?"

Bressey had. He had found them all too busy, except one. That one was Matchett, leader of the Mornington bar. Matchett was bluntly honest.

"No chance to study the case!" he croaked. "And, anyway, no case. Nobody expects you to clear your client. Nobody dreams you'll get even a manslaughter verdict. Fight it out alone, boy, and get all you can get—the credit for being game."

"I intend," whispered Bressey tensely to Dawson Reddick, "to ask a postponement till September."

"Huh?" derisively. "Because Mossop couldn't get here? Tell lies, Allan, and you'll get in wrong with the judge. Tell the truth, and you'll advertise yourself a bungler. Remember, they can hang your client for your blunders, but they can't hang you for her crime. Better face the music."

Bressey stared at the ink-splotched green cloth that covered the long table.

Reddick was right.

The grand jury, duly instructed by Mr. Justice Stringham, retired to deliberate. The court busied itself with naturalization proceedings.

Bressey descended the stone steps to the jail.

Mary Galt's wan smile struck to the young lawyer's heart. "The prettiest face in Mornington," Reddick had said. Now Bressey regarded the prettiest face in Mornington with curious incertitude.

"Is Mr. Mossop here yet?" the girl asked.

"He can't come," gruffly answered Bressey. "I'll handle the court work myself."

The girl's placid serenity surprised him, till he remembered that she could not appreciate, as he did, what a difference Mossop's absence made to her defense.

"Can you swear that you didn't fire that shot?"

She shook her head.

"Well," impatiently, "can you swear you *did?*"

She passed an uncertain hand over her forehead.

"It's all a blur. I remember flinging open the car door, and then . . ."

"Yes, yes! I know all that."

What he did not know, even yet, was whether to let her testify.

"It can make no difference," he insisted to himself. "Nothing she says or leaves unsaid, nothing I do or leave undone, can alter the verdict."

When he left he had determined a desperate move. That move came when, with no bills yet presented by the grand jury, the court adjourned for the day. Bressey buttonholed Prosecutor Kergin.

"Mr. Kergin," he ventured, "I can't see where you can hope to establish more than a case of manslaughter."

Kergin's hard gaze transfixed him.

"So far as you're concerned, Bressey, hope is not a factor. The evidence proves a peculiarly cold-blooded murder, and we—if that's what you're hinting—wont consider a plea of guilty to the lesser charge."

REBUFFED, Bressey kept surprisingly cool.

"Neither are we considering it."

Kergin's grating laugh followed him.

Instead of consulting Mossop, K. C. and leaving Mossop with his brief and a bottle of Scotch to wrestle the problem, Bressey sat late that night in his glistening new law office. On a pad he jotted down a few notes:

Elements of Defense:

When the landaulet emerged from under the viaduct Crofton whistled up the tube, proving he was then O.K. But after that——

Can Kergin prove that someone did not enter the landaulet opposite the knitting mill?

Can Kergin prove that in the excitement following the shot the same person did not step out the right-hand door?

The red-elastic bands must mean papers. Can Kergin explain where those papers went?

Can Kergin explain the cigarette stub beside the car, and the cigarette ash on Crofton's coat?

Can Kergin establish ownership or possession of the revolver?

With these puny questions he meant tomorrow to wage guerrilla warfare against Kergin. But still he left unanswered the vital question confronting the defense:

"Dare I let Mary Galt testify?"

ALREADY haggard with worry and suspense, Bressey on Wednesday morning saw the grand jury file in with a string of true bills. The first criminal case was swept out of the way by a last-minute plea of guilty.

Kergin turned to Bressey with a hard smile:

"Go thou and do likewise," he quoted; and the next moment the clerk read in monotonous singsong:

"Rex *versus* Galt."

Mary Galt, brought in by the constable, without sign of emotion listened to the reading of the indictment. Her "Not guilty" was low-voiced but perfectly clear.

The empaneling of the petit jury to try the case swiftly proceeded. Here the sage advice of Mossop, K. C. would have helped. Mossop's ability to read the faces of jurors had saved many a murderer.

But Allan Bressey, utterly inexperienced, used but three of his twenty challenges.

The petit jury was sworn. While grim old Kergin outlined his case, Mary Galt sobbed just once, when Kergin alluded to the ancient friendship of Samuel B. Crofton for the Galt family.

As Bressey had anticipated, that fatal newspaper article had put Kergin on his guard.

Throughout his questioning of Peter Lane, Crofton's chauffeur, the prosecutor manifestly sought to establish that, from the time Crofton last whistled up the tube, no one except Mary Galt could have had access to him.

"When Crofton whistled up the tube after the car emerged from beneath the viaduct, how did he seem?"

"Just his ordinary self," insisted Lane.

"Not excited or alarmed?"

"No, sir."

"Opposite the knitting mill, could

anyone have entered the car without attracting your attention?"

"I think not."

"Before you reached Main Street, did you hear any revolver shot?"

"No."

"If, just before or just after the shooting, anyone had left the landaulet by the right-hand door, would you have noticed?"

"I am certain I would."

Kergin sat down.

"Pulling your teeth, my young friend," he satirically whispered to Bressey.

Yet Bressey, his questions thus forestalled, took Lane, veritably inch by inch, over the entire route.

"Opposite the knitting mill, in the darkness, a man, moving quickly, might have stepped into the car unnoticed?"

"I don't think——"

"What do you *know?*"

Lane expostulated:

"It's this way—someone might get in; but how and where could he get out without breaking his neck? Tell me that, sir."

The snicker that followed stung Bressey.

"Opposite the knitting mill," he questioned, "you yelled to Joe Sully?"

"No, sir. Joe yelled to me."

"If Joe Sully swears the landaulet came to a complete halt, will you contradict him?'

"I sure will. The car moved slowly but it kept moving."

Bressey, discomfited, glowered while shrewd Kergin with a few well-considered questions tied up the loose ends of Lane's testimony.

Kergin proceeded to prove the actual shooting by a score of witnesses. All these Bressey pounded with questions equally relentless and equally tedious. Endeavoring to shake this testimony was like trying to batter a granite rock to pieces with a powder puff.

One point he did make: that no witness, not even Lane, had specifically observed whether, after the shot, the right-hand door of the landaulet was closed or open. This point he took pains to stress.

Police Chief Clive's testimony gave Bressey opportunity to tediously probe the puzzle of those red elastic bands, one hanging from the inner handle of the open door, the others on the floor of the landaulet.

"Did you find any loose papers inside the car?"

"No, sir."

"If no loose papers were found on Crofton's body or in the car, how do you explain the red elastic bands?"

"Mr. Crofton might have been fooling with them. But as a matter of evidence," the police chief quickly added, "I can't tell you."

"So"—Bressey's sneer was meant to impress the jury—"that point in your supposedly perfect case remains unexplained?"

"Except," quietly countered Clive, "that the bands are similar to those Mr. Crofton used in his own office."

"So that the missing papers must have been his?"

"I have no knowledge of any papers."

Bressey glanced at the jurors. They had the implacable look of men whose convictions had already crystallized beyond any possibility of being shaken.

Kergin called: "Francois Xavier Delorme."

A buzz went round the courtroom, as the discoverer of the famous Delorme mine entered the witness box.

Bressey, with a sinking heart, awaited Delorme's testimony.

CHAPTER X

THE TIGHTENING NOOSE

DELORME was tall and gaunt, stoop-shouldered, with a seamed face. A weather-beaten man, yet not beaten into grayness—black hair slicked down with oil; black mustache curled at the tips; eyes black, with a penetrative gaze.

Kergin's questioning was incisive.

"Do you own a revolver?"

"I did."

"When and where was it last in your possession?"

"The twenty-eight' of Feb'ry, in M'sieu Crofton's office."

"Would you recognize that revolver if you saw it again?"

"Yes."

Kergin produced the weapon with which Crofton was killed.

"Is this the revolver?"

With exceeding care Delorme examined it.

"It is."

Delorme testified that he had come to Mornington to see Crofton on a matter of business. Crofton was in Toronto; but Shedd invited him into the private office to talk things over. He left his coat on a chair, his hat on the counter, and his revolver beside his hat.

"Jus' then," he went on, "a young lady came in. She is ver' mooch excite."

"A moment," interposed Kergin. "Look at the prisoner. Is she the lady who came into Crofton's office while you were there?"

Delorme smirked at Mary Galt.

"Could I forget one so beautiful? She is indeed the same."

Bressey leaned close to Mary Galt.

"Why didn't you tell me this?" he whispered.

Guiltily she regarded him:

"I—I didn't think it mattered."

Delorme pursued his testimony. The young lady had asked for Crofton. Shedd had explained that Crofton was still in Toronto, but might be back that night. Then Shedd had rejoined him—Delorme—in the private office.

The young lady must have gone out, for Delorme heard the outer door slam. When he came out later his revolver was missing.

"I tell M'sieu Shedd," pursued Delorme, "that *trés jolie* young lady, she is mad enough for kill someone. Is it that *she* had taken my revolver?"

Delorme explained that, failing to find the revolver, he had dinner with Shedd at the hotel, after which Shedd drove him to the C. N. R. depot to catch the 7.50 for Toronto.

"Which," commented Kergin, in a loud aside, "left just 25 minutes before Crofton's train pulled in."

Bressey got up. He must not lose this chance to implant some slight hint of suspicion in the unreceptive minds of these grim jurors.

"You had the revolver out because you had made threats to kill Crofton?"

Mr. Justice Stringham seemed disposed to object; but Kergin, with a deprecatory smile, interposed:

"Under the circumstances, we must allow my learned friend to clutch at a few straws."

"Proceed," snapped the judge.

Delorme met the question blandly:

"We French get excite ver' easy. M'sieu Crofton, he is one ver' good frien' to me. It is true, I say t'ings to M'sieu Shedd, but I do not mean not'ing—no, no!"

BRESSEY, conscious that Delorme deliberately fenced, tried to menace the witness as old Mossop might have done. He was pitifully conscious that he was a lamb trying to roar like a lion. Delorme insisted that he had never seen the revolver since then.

He insisted that at 8.20, when, Bressey suggested, he might have stepped from the darkened curb into the red landaulet, he was actually many miles east of Mornington.

Yes, and a gentleman named Drummond, with whom he played poker all the way to Toronto, could corroborate that.

The young lawyer, sitting down, wiped the perspiration from his forehead. He felt limp as a rag.

Behind an outspread newspaper Dawson Reddick daringly puffed at a surreptitious cigarette. Bressey felt the derisive pity in his glance.

"I have one more witness before adjournment," announced Kergin, "but, since my learned friend has raised these minor points, in the morning I shall present this man Drummond." He paused. "Call Dawson Reddick."

Reddick nonchalantly laid aside his cigarette. In his leisurely progress to the witness stand he passed close to Bressey.

"You'll see," he whispered, "why I preferred not to hold this brief. Kergin did excuse me from the inquest, but——"

Bressey, staring at the green cloth, noticed the stub of Reddick's cigarette. Mechanically, he picked it up. He could guess what was coming.

It came, in a few incisive questions and business-like answers. In the evening of the 28th of February, Dawson Reddick, on Main Street, saw the red landaulet turn out of Hampton Avenue into Main.

"I was on the right-hand side," testified Reddick. "The landaulet passed fairly close. The chauffeur, Pete Lane, was in the driver's compartment, alone; and Crofton was alone in the passenger's compartment. He was leaning back in the right-hand corner, looking toward the left.

"Next thing I knew, the landaulet drew toward the opposite curb. It halted, and I heard a shot. I ran across the street. The right-hand door of the landaulet was shut. I tried to open it. It did not open readily, so I ran around to the opposite side, where the crowd was. Lane was wresting the revolver from the prisoner. Crofton was dead in the car."

"Could anyone," questioned Kergin, "have shot Crofton and got out by the right-hand door?"

"No. From the time the landaulet turned out of Hampton Avenue till I heard the shot, my eyes were on the right-hand door. I would most assuredly have seen if anyone approached, or if anyone was with Crofton. No one was with him, and no one approached the car from the right-hand side."

Bressey swallowed hard. He recognized in Reddick's fateful testimony the death-blow to his hopes. Yet, mechanically, he kept up the fight.

He picked up the cigarette butt from the long table.

"This is yours?"

"It is."

"Have all your cigarettes this same monogram in Gothic capitals?"

"Yes."

And, before Bressey could move, Reddick leaned forward and picked up from the exhibits on the clerk's desk another cigarette butt, the one Chief Clive had produced.

"This," said Reddick, in clear tones, "is mine."

"When Chief Clive says this probably fell to the ground when Crofton's body was lifted out of the landaulet, would you contradict him?"

"I most certainly would. I distinctly remember throwing it to the ground when I went to help lift down the body."

"So the cigarette ash on the car

seat did not come from this cigarette?"

"No."

Bressey stood indecisive. That proposition Reddick had made to him the night before court opened—dare he use it? Could he honorably use it when he had pledged himself not to do so? Dare he use it, when it would go so terribly far to neutralize the presumption that Crofton had dealt dishonestly with Mrs. Galt?

"That will do," he said.

IN THE cell-room below, he talked with Mary Galt after adjournment.

"I can't see a break in the evidence," he warned her. "We have nothing left but an appeal to their emotions."

He gazed away from her.

"Be ready to testify when I call you."

The girl blanched.

"What am I to tell?"

Bressey hesitated. Here the veteran Mossop could sedulously and shrewdly have coached the girl as to when to smile plaintively at the jurors, when to hide her face, when to weep, when to go into hysterics—yes, and what to withhold if she could, and how much to admit if she must.

"Tell the truth," said Allan Bressey simply.

There was a long silence. Bressey was awed by the curious serenity with which Mary Galt had borne herself through the tedious hours while, cross-questioning witness after witness, he stubbornly but vainly groped for some slight toe-hold for his defense.

"You've held up splendidly," he told her. "I—I don't want to encourage you about the outcome. Nor to—to frighten you. But . . ."

He hesitated. He wanted to prepare her in some slight degree for the inevitable verdict.

"Whatever the—the outcome," he blurted, "the fight wont be necessarily finished with the verdict. It may just begin then. And, of course, if the verdict is *guilty*, there is just one sentence under our law. You know that, Miss Galt? Don't let it frighten you—too much."

The girl retained her poise. Did she comprehend what he blunderingly tried to convey to her?

He made a desperate effort, but could not nerve himself to speak more directly of what was in his mind—the stern judge, the black cap, the solemn sentence, "to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may the Lord have mercy upon your soul."

Mary Galt smiled trustfully at him; and Bressey mused, inconsequentially, that the prison pallor had sponged out the last traces of her faint freckles.

Her hand rested confidingly in his.

"I—I'd feel very much afraid, Mr. Bressey, if—if it weren't for you."

CHAPTER XI.

RED ELASTIC BANDS

THOSE words rang in Bressey's ears all night. Desperately, but vainly, he tried to put the case out of his mind; to recruit his shaken strength with a few hours' sleep. But sleep he could not; so at last he dressed and went out into the empty streets.

An hour later, led by devious ways he could not remember, he found himself at the C. N. R. depot on the outskirts of Mornington.

This far west and north, the duplex stations familiar to New York commuters were unknown; here all traffic disembarked on the southern platform and had to cross the railroad tracks to reach the business section of Mornington.

Here, the red landaulet, turning

from the depot yards, had halted on Hampton Avenue waiting for the westbound to pull out.

Bressey could see, on the street east of Hampton, a glittering service station. But he followed the path of the landaulet.

As, three blocks further north, he descended beneath the C. N. R. viaduct, a heavy freight passed overhead with a grinding clatter that fairly deafened him.

Emerging from beneath this viaduct, Crofton, all unsuspicious of what was coming, had whistled up the tube to Pete Lane.

Just ahead of him, Bressey discerned the dark mass of the knitting mills. Opposite, where trees and shrubbery now leafing out threw heavy shadows, the landaulet, hugging the right-hand curb, had slowed.

All day long he had been trying, by hints and innuendoes, to persuade a skeptical jury that at this very point, someone, unseen by Lane or Sully, had stepped from the curb into the landaulet.

"That theory," Bressey told himself in an excess of honesty, "is preposterous!"

IN court next morning the traveling salesman, Drummond, caught by long distance telephone at Windsor the previous night, testified that on the 28th of February Delorme had boarded the 7.50 eastbound at Mornington and had ridden with him the entire distance to Toronto.

Bressey harried the witness with innumerable questions regarding his previous acquaintance with Delorme, which was nil, and his identification of Delorme, which was absolute. In the end, he felt he had merely strengthened Kergin's case.

"Young man," jibed Kergin, "that evidence lets Delorme out. Now, we will explain that cigarette ash."

John Stacey, the tower man on duty at Hampton Avenue crossing on February 28th testified that after the 8.15 westbound pulled out he noticed the red landaulet crossing the tracks.

"I saw Crofton in the back seat," he added. "He was smoking a cigarette."

Bressey got up.

"Did you," he shakily questioned, "see anything else?"

"N-no."

"Oh. You *did* see something?"

"Yes, if you call it that. Crofton's coat was caught in the car door. As the car crossed the track he opened the door to snatch the coat inside."

"You are sure it was a coat?"

"Ye-es. I—at first glance I thought it was a sheet of paper. Then I saw it was, not white, but gray—the corner of a light gray coat."

Right there Bressey halted his questioning. The red elastic bands, he had all along insisted, meant loose papers, mysteriously vanished. Had he been on the verge of clearing up that puzzle for Kergin?

Shrewd Kergin saw; but to his renewed questioning Stacey mulishly insisted that what he saw, caught in the landaulet door, was the corner of a light gray coat.

Kergin called Thomas Shedd.

The debonair Mr. Shedd corroborated Delorme's story of Miss Galt's visit to Crofton's office, and the disappearance of the revolver.

He made no attempt to dispute that Delorme had brandished the revolver and made threats against Crofton. That, he explained, was why he had taken personal charge of Delorme—to get him out of town before Crofton returned. It had, he admitted, required some coaxing.

After seeing Delorme on board the 7.50 train he had stopped at the service station, a block from Hampton Avenue, to have the mechanic look over his engine.

He did not leave the service station till 8.28, and reached Main Street only in time to see Crofton's body lifted down from the red landaulet.

Kergin asked one more question.

"Mr. Crofton had the reputation of disapproving the use of tobacco. What have you to say as to that?"

Shedd hesitated.

"He did not smoke in public."

"You mean, he smoked on the sly?"

"A little."

"That will do," said Kergin.

Bressey was weary in mind and body, and unutterably sick at heart. His cross-questioning of Shedd proved rambling and ineffective.

"How much more testimony have you, Mr. Kergin?" asked the judge as Shedd at last stepped down.

"Just one witness."

The witness was Joseph Sully, night-watchman at the knitting mills. Sully told of shouting to Pete Lane when the landaulet passed. The landaulet, he insisted, did not halt.

Bressey took the witness.

"What did you shout to Lane?"

"Why," explained Sully, shamefaced, "I yells, 'Hi, Pete!' and Pete, he yells, 'Hello, Joe!' and I yells, 'Say, Pete, d'you want to buy some good rabbits?' "

The titter that swept the courtroom brought a flush to Bressey's face.

"While you two were shouting, you were also looking at one another?"

"I s'pose so."

"So that neither of you would be apt to see anything that happened on the further side of the landaulet?"

"I dare say we couldn't."

Mr. Justice Stringham spoke:

"Pardon me, Mr. Bressey, but I am naturally curious—— Witness, did Pete Lane buy any of your rabbits?"

The titter became a roar of laughter.

"No, judge. Pete, he didn't feel like goin' into rabbits."

"Then," flashed Bressey, "what made you think he did?"

"On my way down to the mills that night I got talkin' to Mr. Shedd outside the service station. He says to me as how Pete Lane, he was thinkin' of goin' into——"

"That will do," snapped Bressey.

He sat down.

THE crucial moment had come. Kergin's case was closed. There was nothing left except to call Mary Galt, record her denial of the actual shooting, let her fight her way as best she could through Kergin's pitiless cross-examination, and then appeal to the emotions of those emotionless jurors.

But Kergin had not finished. He was recalling the debonair Mr. Shedd. The debonair Mr. Shedd did not remember speaking to Sully that night, or mentioning rabbits.

Of course Sully *might* have spoken to him. He had not left the service station till 8.28, and he was certainly there when Sully went to work, just before 8 o'clock. No—he himself did not keep rabbits.

Again the courtroom tittered. Bressey, flushing, felt that even the judge was making game of him.

Shedd was stepping down when Bressey halted him. Kergin regarded the young lawyer with a touch of pity.

"The boy's all in," he muttered to Dawson Reddick. "I wouldn't be in his shoes right now for a million dollars—dead tired, licked to a finish, and about to open his case. What's he up to now, I wonder?"

"Sparring for time?" cynically suggested Reddick.

Bressey, indeed, was on the verge of collapse.

As he dragged forth question after futile question, he clung at times to

the rail of the witness stand to steady himself.

Shedd, imperturbable, smiled at him, answering everything with an inexhaustible, almost pitying patience.

"Regarding this revolver," questioned Bressey, as he picked up the weapon from the clerk's desk, "can *you* swear it is the same weapon Delorme left in Crofton's office?"

"Let me see it," invited Shedd.

He carefully examined the weapon. Bressey, picking up the four red elastics, aimlessly twisted them about his fountain pen.

"It is the same revolver," testified Shedd.

Bressey took it. Absently he held it, while he went on twisting the elastics.

"Will you swear," he asked, "that Delorme's revolver was filed to a hair-trigger?"

Puzzled, Shedd regarded him.

"What do you mean?"

"So that a very slight pull or pressure will discharge it instantly."

"I did not notice *that*."

Bressey, silent a moment, went on fumbling with the red elastic bands. He twisted them about the fountain pen once more, and then about the revolver.

So prolonged became the silence, Kergin fancied he had finished.

Mr. Justice Stringham regarded him questioningly.

But Bressey was looking at Mary Galt, even while his fingers continued to absently twist those red elastics. Kergin saw the girl's glance grow hopeful.

He frowned, and chewed savagely at a pencil.

"Are you through, Mr. Bressey?" inquired the judge.

Bressey glanced at him, and then at the tangle of revolver, red elastics and fountain pen in his hands.

"Your lordship, I was just considering——"

He lifted the tangle. He tugged slightly at the fountain pen as though to free it.

A loud explosion shattered the unsuspecting quiet of the courtroom. Through the clearing smoke Allan Bressey, of a sudden tensely alert and tremendously wide awake, leaned menacingly toward Thomas Shedd.

"Now, Mr. Shedd, now that I have demonstrated the actual purpose of those mysterious red elastics, will you tell his lordship and the jury just what you did between the time the red landaulet left the depot and the time you — *you*, Mr. Shedd — stepped unobserved from the red landaulet opposite the knitting mill?"

CHAPTER XII.

AFTERWARD

GRIM Kergin at last emerged from the witness room where he had been taking a statement from the once-debonair Mr. Shedd. He beckoned Allan Bressey.

"Well?" demanded Bressey.

"We may as well get rid of this Galt jury," growled Kergin. "Kick them, and let them go. What evidence have you?"

"You," said Bressey, quietly, "have all the evidence. Your witnesses established my case point by point; by Lane and Stacey, that the red landaulet halted at the Hampton crossing; by Stacey, that a man wearing a light gray coat and smoking a cigarette—a man he mistook for Crofton—must have entered the car there.

"It was established by Lane that the rumbling of the freight above the viaduct drowned the sound of any shot fired in the landaulet, if, indeed, the murderer did not use a silencer, *that time;* by Lane and Sully, that

opposite the knitting mill their attention was centered on one another; and by Sully, that Shedd, knowing the route the landaulet must take, deliberately contrived that Sully should distract Pete Lane's attention while *he*, unobserved, stepped out of the landaulet and made his getaway."

"Go on," urged Kergin.

"What led me astray," said Bressey, "was that one circumstance of Crofton, the supposed Crofton, whistling up the tube to Pete Lane after the car emerged from under the viaduct. It would, though, be a small matter for Shedd to imitate Crofton's voice.

"In the brief interval he had time to replace the spent cartridge with a blank and adjust the revolver with the elastic bands so that the pull on the left-hand door would discharge it—filed as it was to a hair-trigger."

Said Kergin, with grudging admiration:

"Your bit of drama sure got him?"

Bressey nodded.

"Off his guard. He thought the case finished, with not a hint of suspicion against him. The mechanic at the service station can likely supply what details you still need.

"He can tell you, not merely that Shedd drove away with his car at 8.28, but just when Shedd was inside helping tinker with the engine and just when he was outside, supposedly taking the air."

"Clever," admitted Kergin. "Who could suspect him of a murder apparently committed on Main Street at the precise moment he was leaving the service station a mile away? But how could he foresee that your client——"

"He didn't foresee my client. He meant Pete Lane to be the goat."

"Huh? He didn't admit that to me. But he did admit a double motive. He was sore at Crofton because Crofton wouldn't help unload his worthless Megantic Silver shares on Mrs. Galt. And then there was the big bait—possible control of Délorme, which meant millions. When did you first suspect him?"

"Not," said Bressey, "till I began to puzzle over his phenomenal interest in Joe Sully's rabbits."

"Huh! Well, let's do justice to your fair and much-maligned client. To tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God, the adoring way she looks at you is ominous."

Allan Bressey smiled. He was musing of open air, sunshine, and—freckles on the prettiest face in Mornington.

THE END.

Be sure to begin—

"Still Within the Law"

By BAYARD VEILLER

Author of "Within the Law," "The Thirteenth Chair," etc.

In our June 1 issue

Larry Has a Grouch

By HAROLD De POLO

MR. LARRY O'CONNOR had a grouch on. This was evident from the acute portside angle at which he wore his hat, from the deeply thoughtful manner in which he was staring at the knuckles of his left hand, from the deliberate way in which his right foot was thrust far out as he leaned against the hydrant near the corner.

None, however, took exception to this attitude that was, frankly, almost offensively pugnacious. And let it be understood, incidentally, that the brick-thatched lad was a member of a ward that had never been known as lacking in turbulence.

Mr. O'Connor, after half an hour had gone by, became slightly fed up with getting no action. It was late afternoon of a pip of a summer day, with the workers hurrying homeward. At least there should have been one guy, he figured, to give him an argument.

As the dozenth or more stepped out of the way when they saw that foot, though, he resorted to more telling tactics.

He spat.

When he did so, he hunched his left wing and let his arm sag expectantly. But the stranger at whom the challenge was aimed—a husky boy who nursed a five-ton truck, at that—took one slant at the hopeful opener of hostilities and went merrily onward.

"Hell," said Larry. "Ain't there *one* bird in the ward that——"

"Why the grouch, Larry?"

With the grace and agility of a surprised cat, he spun about as his lips curled in a snarl:

"Wha——"

He didn't finish. Instead, he frowned with exceeding darkness and reached up and pulled off his hat and spoke in a polite sort of a growl:

"H'lo, Maze!"

"That doesn't tell me why you look so ugly. Come on, walk down to the house with me and let me hear the sad story of why you lost or got fired from *this* job. That's it, isn't it?"

WITH a rumble that was unintelligible, Larry O'Connor fell into step with Maisie Costello, giving much the impression of a kid who's been forced by his mother to accompany his sister for a stroll.

His freckled face began to redden when she didn't say a word, and he tried to steal a look at her out of the corner of his eye.

She caught his glance right when it reached her, and turned and faced him with a laugh on her clean, wide lips and a twinkling smile in her gray eyes that somehow seemed to see through people.

"Tell me about it, Larry!"

Mr. O'Connor r e d d e n e d some more, evading the question by savagely putting another.

"That big bum of a' Eye-talian pesterin' you any more? The big stiff, I'll knock him for a gool for life, the nex' time. I should of gave him more of a beatin' before."

Miss Costello shook her head in a manner that caused her bobbed, blonde locks to fluff out roguishly.

"Oh, Larry, what *was* it this time, and are you *ever* going to settle down? Heavens, it's a job trying to be a protecting little sister to you!"

He must have known, from past experience, that there was no use. His hands dug deep into his pockets, and his head drooped a trifle as he avoided her gaze. He spoke almost sulkily:

"Aw, there I was workin' for him five weeks, at a lous—at a mean twen'y-eight per, an' when I brace him for a few bucks raise a coupla days ago, he says 'nothin' doin'.' Hones', can you blame me?

"No, sir, I don't slave for guys like Ginsberg, wrestlin' barrels an' boxes all over his three-flight store, for no twen'y-eight seeds. I chucked the job, that's what I did!"

He glared at her, as he paused, as if he expected a contradiction, a rebuke. But Maisie did no more than let the twinkle partly leave her eyes and start her lips to going into that firm line he knew so well.

"Aw, what else could I do, anyway?" he broke in hurriedly. "I ain't gonna work for no twen'y-eight iron men. Gee, but they're payin' men so rotten it's enough to make one of these red bolsheviki bimbos out of a guy.

"*I* ain't gonna stan' for it, with a lot of other birds pickin' soft money an' ridin' aroun' in cars an' wearin' stones in their ties an'——"

"And wearing *stripes* some day, Larry—if you happen to mean Jim Lafferty!"

Gravely, with her lips very straight and her eyes very wide and unflinching, Maisie Costello spoke the words as she came to a halt at the stoop of her flat.

Larry didn't redden now. His nostrils dilated, tensed, and got white. Immediately, however, confusion overcame him as those steady eyes looked into his own—into his own and through them.

"I—I guess I can talk to a guy for a minute on the street without havin' people think I'm runnin' with him, can't I?"

Still she said nothing, but a touch of almost motherly pity had crept into her eyes.

"I gotta meet a guy, Maze," he said, backing away. "See—see you later!"

MR. O'CONNOR, with his shoulders hunched up, ambled on down the block. Most of the gang who knew him, both male and female, let him pass by with a nod, being well aware of his present mood.

Even the hundreds of noisy kids, with whom he had always been a prime favorite, seemed to sense the fact that this was no time to rush up and crawl all over him and indulge in a gentle rough-house.

Indeed, of all the dwellers in the neighborhood who had known Larry practically all his life, only genial old Gus Heitman was not frightened off by the apparent grouch.

"Ach, Larry," beamed the grocer, who happened to be standing in the doorway of his corner store as the other slouched past. "Vat iss it today? Another jobs chucked, yes?"

His round face became gravely troubled, and he clucked his tongue against the roof of his mouth in that manner that signifies mental perturbation.

Oddly enough, Mr. O'Connor did not pass on with a growl; neither did he let loose the south wing that had been itching for hours to get in some deadly work. He paused abruptly, glared, and came over and stuck his face down close to that of the Dutchman.

"I'm *sayin'* I chucked another job,

all right, all right," he bellowed. "Listen, whaddoya think a guy is, anyway, a sucker? Not me—I've woke up for good this time, I have.

"I ain't gonna sling no packin' cases, nor drive no pair of horses, or heave no freight aroun', for no twen'y-eight bucks a week—nor not for no *thirty-eight!* I'm sick of bein' a simp, I am, an' I'm goin' out for jack—for real jack!"

Sadly, old Gus Heitman shook his head and did some more clucking with his tongue.

"Ach, Larry, und since you vas a leedle fella me und mamma has knowed you, und alvays, yes, liked you. For shame, Larry, you should settle down. I know it the grocery bisniss ain't seemin' to call to young fellas, but if you should only listen to me und mamma maybe you might think different.

"Again I'm askin' you, Larry, to come and take a job vit us. They iss goot chances—very goot. Me und mamma ain't got no one, Larry, und alvays ve haf liked you. Ve need a' hones' boy, the same as you. Come, Larry, I start you right off, und ven you get teached the bisniss, you like it. Yes?"

Larry, who had always had a sincere liking and respect for the kindly Dutchman, managed to mumble his thanks as he declined the offer. He found it somewhat hard, too, to keep a gruff tone in his voice, for he never could forget the countless cookies of bygone kid days that the old man had passed out to him.

"I'll tell you, Mr. Heitman," he explained, "it ain't that I got nothin' against your trade, see? I'm out for real jack, get me; an' I'm gonna grab it. I'm tired of lookin' at these other birds, ridin' aroun' in their cars, an' wearin' di'mon's, an' havin' big money to blow, while I'm——"

"Vile you iss makin' it hones', Larry, und takin' no chances of state prisons und penitentiary places!"

Quietly, his face now quite sorrowful, Gus Heitman had broken in with a voice that was sombrely serious.

"I guess I can *talk* to a guy without goin' to jail, can't I?"

But the instant the sentence was out of his mouth Larry O'Connor flushed a dull red and strode hurriedly off. He had just remembered that Heitman had made no mention whatsoever of Jim Lafferty.

HIS grouch grew as he walked down the avenue. What did Maisie mean, anyway, thinking he was ripe to become a crook just because someone must have seen him on the corner, the other day, swapping conversation with a guy for a few minutes? Why was Gus Heitman butting in, too, and just as much as saying that he was on the road to the bad?

Cripes, couldn't a bird talk to anybody he wanted to without having people yap about it? He—he didn't blame Maze; maybe—she was just a girl, after all. Gus, though, didn't have any right to make a crack like that. It—it made him sore.

Mr. O'Connor grunted. What did they have against Lafferty, anyway? Huh, they'd never *proved* nothing on him! How did *they* know that it wasn't only by keeping a handbook on the ponies that he made his jack? Everyone, of course, was hep to that part of it, and he'd bet it was just a couple of jealous guys that had started this stuff about the book being just a blind.

Lafferty hadn't said a n y t h i n g about anything crooked when he'd talked to him the other night, and let it out that maybe he'd like to throw something Larry's way one of these days.

Yeh, they gave him a pain, they did—or old Gus did. Because a

guy didn't keep on working for a twenty-eight berries a week they thought——

His teeth came together with a snap suddenly, and his eyes narrowed rebelliously.

Suppose a guy *was* crooked these days; who could blame him? It was a crime to think about the way a lot of these rich bimbos were yanking in money hand over fist, while a bunch of other poor slobs like himself had to go and work like a dog to grab off twenty-eight per. It—by God, it wasn't right, that's what it wasn't.

No; supposing Lafferty *was* crooked, *he* didn't blame him any. Lafferty hadn't always had it, he'd hinted the other night. But he got tired of being one of the dubs and had finally had the nerve to go out and get his. Absolutely. *He* didn't hold it against Lafferty, if he got his jack not exactly right on the level.

He had a car, didn't he? And a couple of stones that would knock your eye out, didn't he? And he always packed a juicy roll, didn't he?

Aw, Maisie didn't understand what it was to be broke and to have to work for twenty-eight per, while other guys got the gravy. Her old man had a good job, superintendent in a factory; and she only worked at stenography 'cause she liked to do something and only when she wanted to.

And what did old Gus know about how a young guy felt, slaving like a poor nut, and seeing other birds——

"Lemme take you there in the ol' bus if you're in such a hurry, Larry. Come on—hop in!"

Mr. O'Connor paused in his hurried striding. Savagely, he glared at Jim Lafferty, who had pleasantly drawled out the invitation from where he lolled back in the soft cushions of his maroon roadster that was drawn up at the curb.

"Whatinell's eatin' *you?*" snarled Larry. "Do I look like a cripple that can't use his own dogs? If I do, see, I guess it ain't takin' me long to show you that——"

"No offense meant, Larry, ol' kid," cut in Lafferty, his voice more pleasant and ingratiating than ever. "Just my humorous way of puttin' it, I guess. What I mean is, that I'm lonesome sittin' here alone, with an evenin' on my hands; an' I was thinkin' maybe you might like to jump in an' take a spin with a guy. Come ahead, Larry, let's kill the night together."

Larry did some more glaring and mumbling to himself, but he seemed somewhat mollified. He shuffled over to the curb, and kicked at the balloon tire on the car.

"It's a nice night to kill, all right—to kill some o' these birds that offer a fella' twen'y-eight bucks per, I mean," he growled out angrily.

Mr. Lafferty, however, was a neat psychologist. He didn't press anything now. He laughed.

"Gee, I'm feelin' kinda sore on the world myself tonight. It looks like a breeze up the Post Road'll do us both good. Huh?"

"We-e-ell — we-e-ell," Larry answered, as the machine door seemed to naturally swing open, "it can't do us no *harm*, I guess!"

Jim Lafferty's eyes, as he stepped on the starter, were lit for a moment with an expression of cynical triumph.

LAFFERTY, for a time, drove along without saying anything, content to let O'Connor sit back with his own thoughts—thoughts, he knew, which would be bitter and brooding ones.

Why didn't *he* have a car? Why didn't *he* have a ring and a pin like those? Why didn't *he* have jack in his jeans?

That, the slick boy at the wheel

was certain, would be what the other would be asking himself; what he wanted him to be asking himself.

Ripe—as ripe as an overlooked tomato trying to part from the vine, the husky lad was. A good running mate he'd make when he got him jazzed up to it. Oh, well. Handle it easy.

Lafferty, when he'd pushed his bus along out of the city limits, spoke for the first time.

"Damned if I can get rid of the blues. Boy, but it's tough when they stick to you, huh?"

Mr. O'Connor growled—a growl that was probably supposed to be in the affirmative.

His companion let another few miles slide by, and then heaved out a sigh.

"Aw, hell, there's only one way to get cheered up, an' that's with fizz-water. This here's a pip of a road-house, just ahead, an' they got some of the imported juice, too, even if the bums *is* coppin' thirty smackers a bottle for it. Sure, kid, we'll drink champagne. That'll fix us. Whadda we care for the price? I had a good killin', anyways, a coupla nights ago!"

He brought the car to a halt then, and before Larry could answer, or more fully digest the remark, the shed-man came up.

"Evenin', Mr. Lafferty. Nice night, ain't it? Always glad to see you, sir!"

"Take it around, Fred," answered Lafferty, stepping from the machine and noticing that his companion had allowed a flash of envy to cross his face at the reception accorded him.

"Oh, yes, Larry," murmured Lafferty, as they stepped into the road-house, "they treat you right when you got it. *They* got to!"

MR. O'CONNOR, during the next few minutes or so, saw the further truth of this statement. The proprietor came up and clapped the other on the back and called him "Jim"; the head waiter bowed and fawned and took them to the best table in the room that had a reserve sign on it; the man designated to wait on them gave them so much attention that Larry found himself blinking.

When the wine came on in the cooler, it was noticeable that most of the patrons gazed somewhat respectfully at their table. Thirty American iron men a quart, after all, are thirty American iron men—even in these days of hectic booze prices.

Mr. Lafferty, during the consumption of this first bottle, carried on an airy run of conversation that was calculated to instill in his listener a desire to be one of what he termed the "money boys."

He mentioned, casually, spending sums in a week that Larry had frequently worked an entire year to obtain. He spoke of a foreign car he intended getting, a little later in the season, and seemed to fall naturally into remarking that they'd show the world some speed—the two of 'em would.

He dwelt occasionally on what a simp a guy was not to have it in this vale of tears, because it was so easy to get it. And, lastly, he said how he'd often wondered about Larry, with his nerve, and his good looks, and his brain, plugging along like a regular Italian laborer when——

"Dammit, Jim," Larry had finally broken in, when they started on the second quart, "I can tell you I ain't gonna keep on bein' a sucker—that's cold!"

Mr. Lafferty showed his craftiness. Instantly he avoided the subject for the moment by calling over the proprietor, who was passing down the room a few feet away.

"Come on over, Luke, an' have some bubbles. We gotta be chasin' along, an' I wanna have you drink one to my pal O'Connor's health!"

Then he added, in an aside to Larry, as the host started over:

"This dump's dull t'night. We'll beat it to a better place!"

Mr. O'Connor nodded, although he decidedly didn't think it was dull. If you asked him, it was a pretty swell hangout, and the cabaret was sure a bearcat. Also, it wasn't so bad to have waiters and head waiters and owners come up and treat you like you was a king, and—and that champagne certainly was great stuff.

He'd only had it once before in his life: that time when Sid Rosenbloom was up for the assembly and thought he could buy votes by opening wine. Huh, and it had only been about four seeds a bottle then, and not thirty. Thirty—Gawd!

At the next place, a few miles further up the road, Larry was surprised to find that it *was* livelier, and that the cabaret actually did have more pep. Here, again, fizz water was opened—also at thirty seeds—and it tasted even better than the last had.

This certainly was the life. Boy, oh, boy, but it sure was! And him, plugging along on twenty-eight——

Mr. Lafferty played his hand well. Briefly, he gave him a tour of the road-houses, always buying champagne, always getting action from the head waiters, always appearing to be on intimate terms with the main guys.

"Well, Larry," said Lafferty, with a comfortable yawn, at about three in the morning, "this is the life, all right, huh?"

Larry O'Connor, his face flushed, his eyes shining, took a deep breath.

"*I'll* say it is, Jim," was his answer, with a fervor and sincerity there was no hiding.

Mr. Lafferty, at that, showed really supreme skill at playing his cards. He didn't press his hand, as a less astute performer might have been apt to do. Instead, he yawned again, stretched, and rose from the table.

"Well, we'll have some more of this life, don't worry—you an' me," he said. "Come on, let's blow now an hit the hay!"

"Yeah—yeah," agreed Larry, but he got to his feet slowly and looked hungrily around the room as he left.

JIM let two nights go by before he again saw Larry O'Connor. He hunted him up then, just at dusk, and clapped him heartily on the shoulder with a beaming smile.

"Been over the river in the mosquito State, Larry," he said, with a friendly wink. "Pulled a coupla swell deals, too. You an' me is gonna have one bearcat of a time t'night, kid. Say, you'll think we was *pikers* the las' party. Here—looka that!"

He yanked out a roll with a yellow grand on top, and, as Larry gulped at it, the other ran his thumb over it and—*and showed still more grands inside.* Two more at least—two—of that Larry could swear.

"Gee," was all he breathed.

"Oh, well, maybe you'll have some yourself some day," said Lafferty carelessly.

But he immediately quit the subject and discussed the problem of which road-house to visit first as he led Larry to the car.

He gave his quarry just about the same kind of a trip as he had on that other occasion, only more so. He bought magnums instead of quarts, and he handed out sawbucks for tips instead of fives.

He pulled Larry out of it and took

him home, too, just as he was riding on the crest of the champagne wave.

"Great life, huh?" was all he said, as they clambered into the speedy bus.

"Yeah—yeah!"

Larry's eyes, as he got out the words, looked like those of a little girl hearing "Cinderella" for the first time, or of a little boy absorbing his primary dose of "Jack, the Giant Killer."

FOR the next few evenings, briefly, Mr. Lafferty handled his work like the master that he was. He followed the same tactics of showing Larry a good time—with one exception.

Each night, at the stage when the other's eyes began to glisten in a certain way, he slipped him a century note under the table to let him get the personal thrill of passing out the yellow babies himself.

And Larry liked it—yes, Larry liked it. That much was a pipe to see.

So always, when he left Larry at his door, he'd say gaily:

"Aw, well, kid, *you'll* be drivin' *me* home, some o' these nights, in your own bus!"

Larry had begun to wonder if he ever would do just that thing. He wasn't no crook. And if he had to be a crook to ride in them classy boats they could take all the machines in New York an' dump 'em in the drink.

He'd always been a square guy and he was gonna keep on being a square guy. Huh, these birds gave him a pain in the eye, they did, that said that just goin' with Lafferty——

What did they have on Lafferty? Where was the proof he was so bad? Why, plenty of guys was running booze these days—booze and coke. And that was probably Lafferty's graft.

Sure, bootlegging or—or maybe hijacking, or—— Yeah, he'd make a *bet* that was it; he'd make a *bet* that he wasn't no dirty gunman or killer, f'rinstance. Why, it was a lotta bunk, all that stuff that some of the boys and—and Maisie handed out.

He hadn't seen her lately; hadn't seen any of the old bunch. If Lafferty had taken a liking to him, and wanted to spend his jack on him, whereinell was the harm so long as——

"'Lo, Larry!"

Turning with a surprised snarl—for he wasn't on his own block or on the usual avenue he traveled—Larry glared at the burly figure of Rafe Dugan, the boss plumber.

"Whatcha want?"

"Well, Larry," smiled the older man in his best moral manner that Larry had never liked, "I don't like to see a good honest guy like you maybe goin' wrong. Honest guys is too scarce. I'm offerin' you a job. I'm willin' to learn you the trade; an' every Sat'day you git twenty-six——"

"Twen'y-six?" cried Larry, with a savage laugh. "You're offerin' me *twen'y-six* bucks a week 'cause I'm a hones'——"

"Sure, Larry; twenty-six big seeds a week to start an'——"

Mr. O'Connor did not hear the explanations that followed. Over and over, in his brain that seemed to be whirling madly, that twenty-six seemed to be spinning. Twenty-six? *Two* less than the measly twenty-eight he'd been getting; two less than that—*and four less than he paid for a quart of wine!*

Gawd! *That* was what a guy got for being honest—twenty-six. *Two* less than twenty-eight, an' *four* less——

"An' they's lots o' guys would be glad to——"

"*Twenty-six,* eh?" roared Larry, with a streak of craziness going to his eyes as he doubled a fist. "Why, you dirty bum! You—you blood-sucker! You——"

He let his mitt go, at that. But Rafe, getting over his surprise, pulled back just in time to have the knuckles whistle by his chin. Then he took to his heels from a man he was certain had gone mad.

And Larry stood there—stood there with his eyes wide and set and rocking on his feet and murmuring:

"That's what they offer a guy that's honest—two less'n twen'y-eight an' *four* less'n a bottle of fizz-water!"

JIM LAFFERTY, that night, must have seen from the start that his man was ripe. Anyway, he slipped him two century notes; two—when they first got in the car.

"Here, Larry," he said, "I don't wanna see a good scout like you feel like no piker!"

"Neither—neither do I," answered Larry hoarsely.

It was fairly simple after that. All Lafferty had to do was to buy wine and force it on his companion, for Larry gulped it gluttonously. From road-house to road-house they went, and at two o'clock in the morning Lafferty made his bid.

"Listen, Larry," he said, out of the left corner of his mouth in that way he had, when they were sitting off at a table not too close to others, "I like you. I been sizin' you up, 'cause ever since Chick Masson got bumped off with the flu I been needin' a side-kick. You got the bean; you got the looks to go aroun' to these places an' you can wear the clothes; but—but the only question is, see, *are you game*——"

"Am I *game,* huh?" shot back Larry with savage braggadocio! "Say, I'm the games' guy on the block—on the avenue—*in the ward!* Any bimbo that says I'm not, un'erstan', is——"

"Easy, Larry, easy," soothed Lafferty. "I knowed it all the time, see. I jus' wanted to test you. Sure, *you'll* do for a side-kick, all right, all right, an' it ain't makin' book, like some guys think, or it ain't bootleggin', or it ain't hijackin', or peddlin' dope or *any* of them——"

He let his voice trail off, for a moment, peering right into Larry's very soul. Then, while Larry was watching him, spellbound and almost hypnotized, he spoke again.

"My graft is easier'n all that. It's——"

ONCE more there was that instant of hesitation, and then, leaning still further over, his words came tensely, swiftly, clearly:

"See that couple behind me, five tables back? Don't look; don't let 'em notice. Well, kid, it's swells like them, that's robbed their money from the poor anyways, that give me *my* jack. I just trail aroun' to these road-houses, watchin' an' waitin' an' listenin' an' pickin' up what info I can.

"Take this guy an' his frail. They're all hopped up with booze, an' they'll be blowin' before long. Well, we get just ahead of 'em, or just after 'em, an' we stick 'em up a coupla miles from here. It's a cinch. If we're ahead, we stop 'em in the road; if we're behind, we drive up while one of us jabs a gat at 'em an' stops 'em.

"Notice them rocks she's wearin'? Well, kid, they're good for between five an' six thou—easy.

"An' don't think we need to feel bad about it, 'cause I got the dope on this gink. He's the son of Flagler, that billionaire soap guy that's

made his coin by makin' fella's like you slave like dogs for twenty-eight——"

"Twen'y—*twen'y-six*, they offered me t'day," put in Larry with a bitter grunt.

"Sure, sure," concurred the crook. "The bums is gettin' worse every day. Why——"

Mr. Lafferty, suffice it to say, kept right on handing it out; handing it out. He made Larry think, finally, that he'd actually be doing a noble deed by relieving these "bloodsuckers of the poor," as he dubbed them, of their ill-gotten gains.

Yessir; he'd show these dirty human grinders, all right, what one of the poor simps that only got twenty-eight or—or twenty-six a week could do to them.

"Jim," he said, in a hoarse whisper, "I'm on; yep, by God, I'm on, all right!"

"Good stuff, kid," came the soothing answer. "Take it easy, now, an' keep on actin' natural. They're gonna blow soon over to the Kashmiri Inn. I just heard him tell her. Finish your wine calm-like, an' then we'll get out ahead of 'em!"

"Damn 'em," murmured Larry, "the—the bloodsuckers!"

THE crook, once in the car, just let it purr softly along while he continued letting out a line of comment on the injustice of the world, and of how rotten a deal most guys got in it, and that he swore as if he didn't feel, so help him, as if he were giving some of these rich blokes a good lesson, the bloodsuckers.

"The bums—the bums," chimed in Larry.

Lafferty, now that they were about a mile beyond the road-house, slowed down the machine behind a turn. From his pocket he pulled out two pair of silk gloves, tossing one to Larry.

"Safer to wear 'em; no fingerprints, see? Not that they's any danger, get me. But only suckers takes chances!"

Slowly, his eyes still burning with a feverish light, Larry drew on the gloves.

"Uh-huh!"

The stick-up man now extracted two little pasteboard boxes from another pocket, giving one to his companion.

"Handkerchief," he explained. "I buy 'em this way 'cause then there ain't no laundry mark nor no identification. Tie it aroun' your face before we start action—over your nose, close to the eyes, so's it'll cover your mouth an' jaw. Yank your hat down in front, too.

"Safe; that's me—safe. That's why, kid, they ain't got me yet, nor they ain't never gonna. Huh!"

He chuckled, and then lifted the floor mat under his feet and dragged out two license plates. Getting onto the road, he deftly fastened these over the original numbers.

"More safety, Larry!"

He listened for a moment, his head cocked to the side like that of a vulture sighting prey.

"That's their car comin' now, slow-like," he snapped out. "He's prob'ly mushin' it up with her, an' drivin' easy. Remember now, never to use this unless you hafta. Hit 'em on the bean with it if they squawk, but don't pull the trigger unless it's you or him!"

Swiftly, he had drawn out an automatic and thrust it into Larry's hand, whose fingers mechanically closed over it.

"Now," he went on briskly, "hop down here with me. Slip on that handkerchief an' pull down your hat, an' hide in front of the radiator. I'll take the other side of the road. When you see me jump out, jump out, too, an' point the gat at 'em.

"Nine times out of ten they stop; if they don't, we jump the runnin' boards, 'cause this guy'll be goin' slow enough to do it. All you do is hold your gat on 'em an' watch me work.

"When I finish collectin', keep right on holdin' your gun on 'em while I stick a knife I carry in all their four tubes. Then I jump over to the 'bus an' start her, an' when I do, you run over an' grab on an' off we go. Get me?"

"Yeah — yeah," breathed Larry O'Connor, his brain sort of jumbly and his heart behaving in a funny way.

"Get ready, Larry," warned Lafferty from behind a bush on the other side of the highway.

What followed, ever afterward, was somewhat hazy to Larry.

He heard a car approaching; he saw the beam of light made by it; he heard Lafferty cry out; and, as the other sprang forward, he himself automatically leaped out and found himself pointing a weapon.

And then the car came to a sudden halt, and he saw a man in it obediently raising his hands and a girl beside him cringing back against the seat.

"Behave now, see?" Lafferty was ordering. "One peep out of either of you, I'm wisin' you, an' I bump you for keeps!"

"Do as he says, Madge," was the only answer made by the man in the car.

"You're dead right she will," snarled the crook as he moved his gun in a gesture that signified she was to come across.

BUT you never could tell, as Lafferty had sagely remarked on other occasions, how a skirt was gonna act. This one seemed to have been stunned by the sight of the gat, but the harsh words of the gentleman holding it must have sent her nerves to smash.

"Help! Help! Murder! Murder!"

Lustily she let out the words, her voice having a remarkably shrill and penetrating quality.

Her cry, somehow, startled Larry surprisingly. His eyes widened, blinked, and widened again, as if he had been in a sort of a trance and was just coming to. Dimly, through what seemed to be a mist, he saw Lafferty's eyes narrow to ugly slits and heard him say savagely:

"You will, *willya?*"

The action was rapid, then—so rapid that the describing is difficult. Larry, intuitively, realized that the crook was going to "hit 'em on the bean."

As this was driven home to him, and he saw Lafferty's arm raise up and his fingers deftly switch the automatic and grip it by the barrel, his own head completely cleared. There was a dirty rat, across from him, ready to hit a girl—a *girl!*

All his life, from his earliest kid days on a tough block, the one cardinal sin for a male was to raise his fist to a female. It had been born in him; it had been driven in by his good Irish mother; it had been further instilled by old Father Monohan.

And here was he—he, Larry O'Connor, the man who had nearly killed an Italian because the latter had dared to grip Maisie's arm a little tightly when pressing his attentions on her—standing across from a low hound who was going to——

"You *bet* she will," he bellowed, as the arm started to come downward.

Dropping his own weapon, he flung himself with the agility of a striking panther over the car door and across the laps of the two on the seat. Dexterously, as he made his plunge, his knotted right fist that

was the most feared in the ward found its mark.

Clean on the button, as the gun was descending, he caught Jim Lafferty. He himself, at the impact, sprawled over the man and the girl, but he noticed that the automatic dropped into the machine as the crook crashed down from the running board.

"Try to hit a girl, willya? Try to make a crook outa me, willya?" he began to bark out, while he and the man and the girl tried to right themselves from the wedged-in mix-up.

They did so, after a moment, and Larry finally got his feet planted on the road and looked around for Lafferty, as he continued yelling:

"Try to hit a girl, willya? Try to make a crook outa me, willya?"

But the stick-up man had had enough—and more.

Like a flash, when he struck the ground, he had sprung to his feet and made one wild dash for his machine. His bean, as he had always proudly maintained it never did, had not deserted him.

Used to swift work as he was, he got in the car and started the engine and shot the bus ahead, while Larry was still staring fiercely about and shrieking his rage.

MR. O'CONNOR, as he saw the last of the receding tail light, grew calmer. Bitterly, though coolly, he soliloquized, utterly oblivious of the two behind him:

"You'll try to make a bum outa me, huh? Givin' me your wine, an' talkin' big an' easy money, an' tellin' me about the bloodsuckers on the poor, huh? Gawd—oh, Gawd—an' I nearly fell. Me, Larry O'Connor, that's always been a square guy; I nearly fell! Me—*me*, nearly fell for a rat that 'ud sock a girl!"

The last was too much for Larry, and he shook his head sadly and lapsed into silence.

A cough, a discreet and somewhat apologetic cough, sounded behind him.

"Oh, I forgot," he cried, turning hastily about.

"I guess you've got some thanks coming to you, old man," said the youngish chap in the car simply. "And—and anything else in the world that I happen to have!"

"Oh, yes; indeed, yes," said the girl. "I'm so grateful, so very grateful!"

"The mutt, he'd hit you, would he?" was Larry's answer. "An' me; I nearly——"

"Forget about that part of it, old man," said the other, "and hop in and drive along with us. If you've been on the rocks, and I can do anything, remember that my bankroll isn't limited!"

Larry O'Connor had a far-off look in his eyes, and now he brushed the back of a hand across them, and tossed his head as if trying to shake away a too vivid nightmare.

"There's one thing you *can* do for me, friend," he replied gravely, "an' that's drive me, if it ain't a bother, to the nearest subway."

"I'll drive you right to your door, if it's in Oshkosh or Perth Amboy," was the instant answer. "And if it's money——"

But Larry, as he climbed into the car, shook his head. A smile came to his lips as his innate sense of humor returned to him.

"Nope—an' thanks," he grinned. "I still got a thin dime o' me own left an' half of that'll take me home. It—it don't seem healthy for me to be doin' no ridin' in cars. I guess I better wait till I can afford one!"

MR. O'CONNOR, after doing considerable shuffling around the sidewalks of his ward, strangely found himself leaning up against the stoop

where Maisie lived at somewhere around eight-fifteen.

His face was sullen, his hat was pulled down, a cigarette drooped in rakish abandon from his lips. He did not, apparently, hear the door open behind him; he did not, apparently, heard a gentle cough; he did not even seem to hear her words:

"My, Larry, is that the way to stand there, with your hat on and with a cigarette in your mouth?"

He hunched up his left wing in his characteristic gesture, and her voice had a cool and tinkling and pleasant little laugh in it.

"Is *that* the way to *say* good-morning to a lady, Mister Larry O'Connor?"

He turned around slowly, at that, throwing away his butt and sulkily dragging off his hat and showing her smoldering eyes.

"I ain't said it yet, have I?" he growled.

Maisie Costello looked at him with her honest, wide eyes from which happiness shone. She knew that Larry, at last, was again in a healthy state of mind. He was not sore at the world. He was sore at himself.

He proved this conclusively. Red started to creep all over his face, and his eyes and head went down. After a moment he straightened up, his voice ashamed.

"Maze, I been a damn fool!"

A whimsical smile turned her lips, and a quizzically understanding light came into her eyes.

"Well, Larry, sometimes I've thought——"

"I couldn't see it until—until I got to thinkin' this mornin'," he cut in, his voice now firm and his eyes squarely meeting her own. "An' I wanna know if I'm right in thinkin' that if I go to work behind a counter for twen'y-eight per if you'll——"

"I'd marry you, Larry," she told him, "if you were only making twenty-eight *cents* a week!"

For a moment he stood staring at her. Then he turned and started to sprint down the block toward the avenue.

"See you later, Maze—see you t'night," he said thickly over his shoulder.

Two minutes later, panting, he busted into the grocery store and took the genial Dutchman by the arms.

"Say, Mr. Heitman, is that job still open? Am I still worth that twen'y-eight a——"

"Ach, Larry, for sure. Und mamma will be so——"

"Then gimme a' apron an' lemme start!"

Most of us have had at least one "Night Out" to which our memory refers, with more or less precision and dispatch, in preference to any other night in such history as we have made for ourselves in this direction. But

"The Night Out"

By F. Tennyson Jesse

is different. You'll say so if you make a point of securing a copy of Mystery Magazine's June 1 issue. Just the right month, too, for anything of the sort to happen to a bridegroom!

One Thing Settled

By MARION SCOTT

THERE was continual movement about the old house, that enhanced its loneliness. Restless grass defied mouldy bricks to hold it, the trees whimpered at long neglect, groping with unhappy branches toward the sky. The road stumbled in its haste to be past, so there were deep hollows filled with white dust rising ghostlike through the day.

Birds whirred uneasily, shutters creaked and groaned, the steps moved imperceptibly lower, longing to break away; even the paint curled and dropped, weary of trying to cover decay. Only the windows were still, too dull to reflect the light, like very old glazed eyes that have lost hope and can only wait.

Jane Dree was born in the House. She had lived in it for eighty-two years. Brown of the old rafters was in her face, rusty ache of the straining shutters in her voice. Her hair was like the fine white dust, and her eyes, like the windows, were glazed and hopeless. Yet there was about her the constant sense of motion, of straining to be gone. Jane Dree was part of the House. She fitted like finely woven warp into the woof of loneliness.

Nancy was young and golden. When she came to live with Jane Dree she laughed much, sang bright songs, danced as she walked; but that was a year ago.

She moved slower now, never sang, seldom laughed.

The House was covering her with a thin shell of age.

Jane sat all day in her wheel-chair before the window that overlooked the sea. Sometimes she would say in her rusty voice:

"Nancy, there's a boat in the cove. It come off from the ship that's riding at anchor beyond the Point. Come and see, lass."

Nancy would bend over her, resting a quieting hand on the thin shoulders, smoothing back the dusty hair and say softly: "No, Granny, there's no ship, the sea is empty and also the cove."

That was at first. Now she would let her gaze roam over the blank gray water, nod gravely and croon:

"Yes, Granny, a fine ship, with white sails; a boat full of men."

Angry motion would stop her.

"Not full of men. Only one man; just one, a tall brown man with a crimson kerchief round his head. Can't you see him, lass? He's plain as light. Sometimes I'm thinkin' it's blind you are."

Fearfully Nancy would agree.

"Yes, Granny, my eyes are not as keen as yours. I do see him now quite plainly; a tall brown man."

Jane would nod satisfied.

"Sure the eyes of the young are witless things. When I was your age, Nancy, I could see to the Bitter Islands and beyond, on a clear day. But I'm glad you sight him now, the tall brown man with the crimson kerchief."

So she would fall to crooning, staring at the empty sea with glazed eyes.

For a year it had been like that,

until Nancy, looking now at Jane's command could nearly see the ship with white sails, the boat bearing the tall brown man—where? Dearly she would have liked to ask, but could not. Again on a windy night Jane would ask:

"Nancy, do you hear the dancing, the music? It's a happy time the lads and lasses are having now the *Amber Lee* got in."

And Nancy had come to shudder at the sobbing of the trees, but she would say:

"Yes, they're having a happy time."

THEN again on a still night when one could hear the rats scampering behind the brown wainscoting, Jane would start forward in her prison chair.

"What's that, Nancy? There's someone coming down the stairs. Don't you hear? Thump, clump, thump. He's carrying something heavy. I mind it might be a chest full of shining stones and heavy coins, or —there do you hear it? I say it might be a chest, and again it might be a body."

Shivering before the smoldering fire Nancy would find herself listening at first to nothing, then as the year progressed to the slow thump, clump, thump of heavy steps on the stairs.

By day outside the old House in the dancing sunlight that splashed through the apple tree by the back wall, or in the tingling air from the sea on Headlight Point, she laughed about it to Jason.

Jason, studying her with eyes of love, marked how the sparks had gone from her; saw how, when she laughed, she glanced quickly over her shoulder at the house.

"Nancy," he pleaded, "you must leave. It's not right for you to live there with that mad old woman. We'll be married and she can come to live with us."

"Jason, I can't. She's not mad, only old and queer; and she's my Granny and blind. How can I leave her?"

"But I said she could live with us."

Nancy stopped him with a hand on his lips.

"Jason, when you take Granny from the House, she will die, and the House will die, too. It would be like taking the heart out of a body. If the House went to pieces in one of these October gales, Granny would stop living. I tell you she's part of it; she's all that keeps it alive. And the House is in her blood. It's the body, she's the spirit. No, as long as Granny lives——"

Sighing, she turned from the shade of the apple tree, or from the bright summit of the Point, to hear Jane say:

"Nancy, do you see the boat in the cove; the boat bearing a brown man with a crimson kerchief?"

Jason followed sulkily.

"I tell you no good will come of it, Nancy. That house is a devilish place. It has stood for three hundred years. My grandfather heard about it from his grandfather; and not so long ago when Tall Thomas brought the *Amber Lee* into these waters and hid his gold in the caves——"

Nancy turned to stare at him.

"The *Amber Lee?* Tall Thomas? A big brown man with a crimson kerchief?"

Jason stared in turn.

"Well, as to that I can't say: only he was a bad one I've heard. He used to stop on Bitter Island and wait till Dan Dree signaled him. There, I'm sorry. Dan was your grandfather, I guess, though he did go away and no one knew where or why and poor Jane never saw him again. That's what I've heard.

"Well, that's all past and the sea is safe now and the cove's a pleasant

place, but sixty years ago it was different. Why, Nancy, the whole countryside used to gather at the House when the *Amber Lee* came in."

Trembling, the girl heard Jane say:

"Nancy, do you hear them dancing? It's a happy time the lads and lasses are having when the *Amber Lee* gets in!"

"I must go now, Jason. Granny's been too long alone. She's restless, Granny is, bound to that chair. I think she's trying to get away, Jason. But first she must find out something for herself.

"That's what she says to me sometimes, 'If I could know, Nancy; if I could be sure.' Yes, I think Granny's going to leave as soon as she knows for sure. Some day she will find out and when she does——"

She smiled through tears, blew him a kiss and ran toward the House, into the shade of the whimpering trees, up the sagging steps, back to where Jane sat before the window watching the cove.

Came a night when the wind raced in off the sea like a boisterous boy out of school. It leaped on the old house and shook it as a strong boy shakes an empty bag. The sea followed roaring at the game.

It leaped up the headland; climbed with strong hands over the peak; peered down from the sharp rocks; gathered itself for the descent. But the wind turned its head and drove it back, frothing at defeat.

"'Tis a bad night for landing, Nancy," Jane said, pulling her gray shawl closer. "Do you light a lantern and hang it in the upper gable window. The men from the *Amber Lee* will need a beacon. Hurry, girl!"

Fearfully Nancy climbed the narrow stairs and hung the lantern on the rusty hook before the oval window, then crept back to the fire and Jane.

"There'll be no dancing tonight, girl," Jane whispered. "'Twill be all the men can do to land. They'll be comin' soon; Tall Thomas, perhaps, to talk with Dan Dree. You'll be lovin' Tall Thomas, girl. No woman could help it. But you'll not be lettin' Dan know it, for in his black heart is a devil and he'll fight for what's his own, no matter how he come by it."

She nodded slowly, while the wind pounded on the House again, and the sea looked over Headlight Point, slipping down a bit since the wind was so busy with the tremulous old house.

"Dan Dree gets what he wants, lass, remember that. If he sees you with your blue eyes and yellow hair —well, it's not for a woman to say evil of her mate; but you'll be hidin' when he comes in, promise me that."

Fearfully Nancy glanced at the heavy oaken door leading to the draughty hall.

"Yes, I'll hide," she whispered.

"'Twould be best. There was a girl once, a laughing slip of a girl, and Dan Dree when he saw her marked her for his own. He should never have had her, she so young and small and he so big and fierce; but he married her because no one dared say 'no' to him. Was that the boat grounding on the beach, Nancy?"

"No, Granny, but the House does tremble so. Jason said some time the wind would tear it down, it's so old."

"Yes the House is old, lass; old and wise. Old things learn much; they see and feel and remember, even houses. This House has lived so long. Myself now, I have not lived a third of the life of the House, yet I have seen so much. Is the lantern swinging, lass?"

"Yes, Granny."

"Now, when they come, Tall Thomas and Dane Dree, listen, girl, there's bad blood between them, I'm thinkin'. 'Tis said Tall Thomas loves

Dan's wife, the little young wife I told you of.

"'Tis even said he plans to run off with her, because for all his great size he is a gentle lad with those he loves. Fierce and terrible to some; gentle and kind to others. Oh, a fine lad is Tall Thomas."

"Granny, the wind! And wasn't that a dash of water against the pane? If the sea should run over the Point——"

"It might, girl; it might. 'Tis said it did one time. But the House was young then. It's old now. Old things grow tired. If the sea comes now I doubt if the House would care.

"Now, about Dan and Tall Thomas. I've heard Dan knew his wife loved Thomas; knew they planned to run away. Thomas would have taken her south away from these cold, gray rocks, the mists and storms. He knew of a place—perhaps my mind wanders—did the hall door slam?"

"No, Granny; it's only the wind and sea."

"Who knows? Perhaps it's Dan letting Tall Thomas in. He'll say they have things to discuss, the while Dan's wife waits here just as we wait now. They'll go upstairs, the two of them. If you listen, you can hear the sound of their voices——"

There was a sullen roaring, a scream of wind. Old Jane straightened, head high; on her face there was such a look of blind horror that Nancy drew back with a cry.

"There's trouble abroad tonight," Jane moaned. "Listen, girl; they're fighting in the room above, Dan Dree and Tall Thomas. They're beating at each other in the light of the smoky lamp; they're clutching at each other's throats.

"Dan can't stand against him, against the man who loves Dan's wife. He'll beat him down; he'll come running down the stairs; they'll go away together, Tall Thomas and Dan Dree's wife——"

She slumped forward.

NANCY'S fascinated eyes were staring at a long dark stain on the floor near the door.

"Granny," she cried shrilly, "the sea, it's come over the rocks."

But Jane was not heeding, her sightless eyes were raised to the stained oaken rafters.

"Listen, girl, to the sounds above; the fight's over. Tall Thomas has won; he's killed Dan Dree. Now, he's coming down the stairs; there he is now. But how slowly he comes! Do you hear him; thump, clump, thump. He's carrying something, Nancy; something heavy. It might be a chest with bright stones and heavy coins, or it might be a body."

The water ran toward them in dainty curls like a playful kitten. Night flowed past the black window in a windy torrent.

"He's reached the hall; he'll be coming in now. Nancy—no, he's not stopping; he's going on, still carrying the chest. Is it a chest, Nancy? Why don't we find out? We don't want to be tortured for sixty years by not knowing what Tall Thomas carried—if it was Tall Thomas! Suppose it was Dan Dree that came down so slowly carrying something——"

Nancy leaped up and reached the door. The water was to her ankles, bolder now, stronger.

"Granny, we must get out. We'll drown if we stay. Oh! You can't walk; let me pull your chair."

When she opened the door the water rushed past her knees.

"There's only one chance, the west room; that window opens on higher ground."

She grabbed the wheel chair:

"I'll have to take you, I must."

Like a vise, the old hands fastened on her straining wrists.

"There's one thing we must settle, before we go, Nancy. You must find out who went down those stairs, who slipped out into the night with his burden and never came back. I can't go on living here without knowing; waiting, watching, wondering, looking for each day to bring the *Amber Lee* back; to send off a small boat with Tall Thomas to take me away from the mists and winds.

"If he killed Dan Dree, I'll forgive him, if he'll only come back; but if Dan"—her voice rose to a scream—"who was it, Nancy? Tell me who passed the door that night when they fought in the room above."

Nancy struggled at the crazed hold. The water was cold about her, rising, rising!

With a tremendous effort she broke away, seized the chair, dragged it to the door, through the flood, up the slanting incline to the west room. It was dry here except about the ankles. The water would reach here last.

She released her hold to beat at the stubborn rusted window-catch. How to get the chair through—she wondered if she could carry Jane.

With a cry she leaped down the sloping floor; the chair had escaped and was rolling smoothly down into the rising waters. Through the open doors she saw the room they had quitted; the water was to the chair-backs.

Jane was silent, head drooping. Holding the chair with one hand, Nancy fought with the catch, sobbing in fright and helplessness.

She doubled her hand into a small fist and smashed at the pane. It cracked, leaving sharp red marks on her fingers. She thrust her strong young shoulder against it, pounded it till blood stained her waist, then with one hand on the chair she climbed through.

"Now, Granny, I'll get you; try to help me."

The wind tore at her like a maniac. A tree uprooted, crashed down behind her; lightning slashed the sky.

"Granny, Granny!"

The cry was a scream of despair. Jane was struggling frantically. The heavy chair tore like something alive at Nancy's fingers; furiously she clung to it.

Then like one possessed, the old woman who had not taken a step for twenty years rose upright, surged forward. The girl's hold broke; the chair slid down the incline into the black waters.

For just a moment Nancy saw the dust-white head erect; caught a glimpse of the upturned face. The lips were moving; she was saying something. Calling in the windy darkness, the words came in snatches:

"I know—I know——"

Then she fell and the waters closed over her.

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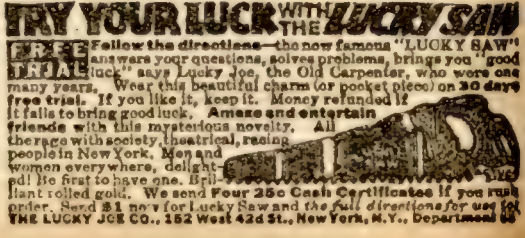
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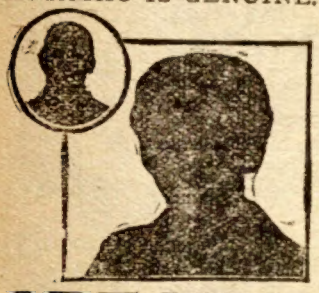

Jack Evans, widely known athlete, was almost entirely bald as shown in photo. Had been losing his hair a long time, he writes, but it started growing anew when he began with Kotalko. By using Kotalko a short time he obtained a full growth just as you see in the large photo.

From Photo of M. C. MacDowell

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From Photo of Frances Lonsdale

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(Signed) F. LONSDALE

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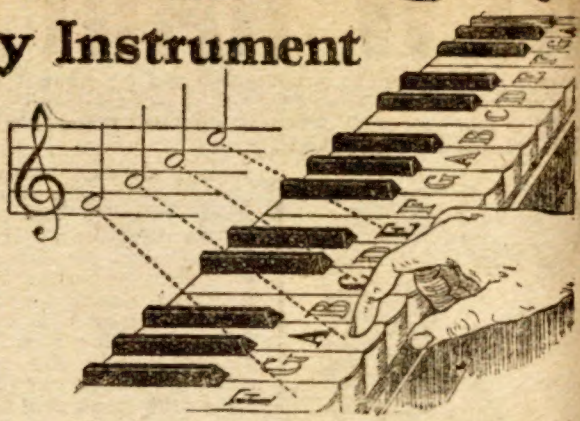

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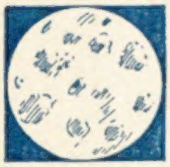

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